THE MAN WHO DARED

BY JOHN P. RITTER

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EVEN THE TERRIBLE GUILLOTINE, DISAPPEARED FROM THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS LIKE THE PHANTASMS OF A DREAM.—*Page* 262. *Frontispiece.*

THE MAN WHO DARED

By JOHN P. RITTER

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE TIME OF ROBESPIERRE

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The Man Who Dared.

THE AUTHOR DEDICATES THIS

NOVEL TO HIS FRIEND.

M. J. C.

PREFACE.

In justice to himself, the author of the following historical romance is anxious that its readers shall understand that he would never have ventured to write it, if he had known that the great Sardou had chosen the same theme for his wonderful tragedy, "Robespierre," which Henry Irving is now playing with such success in London.

Having always been a delighted reader of French History, he naturally perceived the splendid possibilities for an interesting novel which the thrilling events connected with Robespierre's last days of despotism presented. For many months, the plot and incidents of his narrative gradually assumed definite form in his mind, and, when he was called upon to produce a short novel for a current publication, he chose Robespierre's downfall as his theme.

The romance, as it originally appeared, having excited some attention from those who read it, he resolved to make many radical alterations in the plot, to endue it with greater historical value, and to enlarge it to its present dimensions. In short he has devel-

oped a hastily written sketch, into a book of double its size, trusting that the extra study and labor involved in the task will not prove to have been spent in vain.

One merit he can claim for his romance, if no other. He has scrupulously followed the facts and traditions of the period treated, and has taken but few liberties with the really historical personages whom he has described. If the reader finds other merits in the narrative; if he can conscientiously praise it for its realism, plot, or style, the author will feel that his difficult task has been rewarded.

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THE MAN WHO DARED.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTERRUPTION TO THE BALL.

It was during the last days of the Reign of Terror that Representative Alphonse Vauban gave a ball, in his mansion on the Rue Saint Honoré, in honor of Robespierre.

The entire building glared with lights. Every apartment from basement to attic was thrown open to the guests, who crowded the dancers in the ballroom, jostled one another on the stairways, and thronged the upper chambers; for, as became a good republican, M. Vauban had invited all Paris to the entertainment.

Tallien was there, and Fréron, and Collot d'Herbois and Barras, with other famous revolutionists, mingling promiscuously with the rabble of *citoyens* and

their wives in a spirit of equality and fraternity—all hobnobbing cheerfully in celebrating the perpetual reign of liberty.

Cheerfully?

Aye, with an enthusiastic gaiety, notwithstanding that dread terror of the guillotine lurked deep in many a heart.

In an alcove of the ballroom, under a bower of broad-leaved palms, stood M. Vauban with his only daughter, Louise, extending a cordial greeting to the butchers, bakers, and candlestickmakers of Paris whom victorious "Sansculotism" had raised to their own social level.

"In the name of the Republic, welcome, *citoyen!*" he exclaimed heartily, as he shook each citizen by the hand.

And to each of their wives:

"My greeting, *citoyenne,* in the name of liberty!"

There could be no doubt of M. Vauban's sincerity in expressing himself thus; for his honest face glowed, and his eyes renewed their sparkle, with each repetition of the words.

But a close observer might have detected a certain condescending air in the beautiful Louise, which would have justified the suspicion that she considered herself superior to her guests. In her father's hospitality there was downright heartiness; in hers a gracious reserve. And this difference was accentuated in their attire.

M. Vauban wore a modest black tail-coat, with high rolling collar, and broad lapels; black cloth knee-

breeches, silk stockings of the same somber hue, and low-cut shoes with plain pewter buckles.

His daughter, on the other hand, was most sumptuously arrayed. A close-fitting bodice of rich silk, cut low in the neck and fastened with a jeweled clasp in front, and a clinging, diaphanous gown showed her exquisitely molded figure to advantage. Costly bracelets encircled her plump, white arms; a circlet of sparkling brilliants wound round her swan-like neck, and her glorious black hair was bound by bands of gold, and twisted in a Grecian coil behind.

The critical *citoyennes,* ever ready to mark the slightest aristocratic tendency in a sister, were quick to discern that, though she smiled sweetly upon them as they passed before her, her luminous, black eyes seemed to look over their heads. She addressed them as her equals, it is true, yet there was an indefinable reservation in her manner which held them at a distance.

Robed like a princess, and of a refined and noble beauty, it is probable that no amount of condescension on her part could have saved her from their jealous mistrust.

But, though Louise Vauban was not popular with the women of Paris, she was adored by the men. Representatives of all political parties—Jacobins, Moderates, Girondists, Dantonists—agreed in calling her a model daughter of the Republic, and even the great Robespierre himself had expressed the opinion that she was an example for all the women of new-born France to follow.

All men admired her, and many of the younger ones loved her. She had suitors innumerable, among them acknowledged leaders in the affairs of the Republic, either on the field of battle, or on the floor of the National Convention.

Many of these suitors hovered round her now, assiduous in their attentions, although they knew that their gallantry was hopeless; for she had given the world plainly to understand that she would never marry. Indeed, she loved her father with an adoration that absorbed all her faculties, and, since the death of her mother, had resolved to devote her life to his happiness.

Nor was M. Vauban unworthy of her affection. Generous, high minded, brave, he lived for but two objects—his daughter and the Republic. His home life was beautiful in its devotion; his public life noble in its enthusiasm.

Although an ardent and consistent revolutionist, he was not an extremist in his ideas. He had deprecated the execution of Louis XVI, opposed the acts of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and even challenged the displeasure of Robespierre by protesting against his sanguinary measures. That he still retained the friendship of the "Incorruptible One" was due to his honesty, rather than his tact.

It had been announced that Robespierre was to be the honored guest of the evening, and his arrival was momentarily expected; but the hours passed and Robespierre did not come.

What could be the reason for his absence? Repre-

sentatives Tallien and Fréron, whispering together in a sheltered corner, remarked upon the circumstance.

"Robespierre keeps away, it seems," said Tallien. "If he does not drop in to shake hands to-night, let Vauban beware!"

"You are apprehensive, Tallien," replied Fréron reassuringly. "You must remember that Robespierre has been keeping much to himself of late. He has absented himself from the Committees and has not appeared in the Convention for over a month. Why, then, should he distinguish this gathering with his presence?"

"Because he professes to be Vauban's friend. Because this ball is given in his honor."

"But if he is Vauban's friend, as you say, why should Vauban beware of him?"

"Have you forgotten the fate of Danton?" asked Tallien, in tones of profound solemnity. "Was not Danton Robespierre's friend?"

"*Mon Dieu,* Tallien!" exclaimed Fréron, with a shudder, "you positively frighten me. If Robespierre sacrifices Vauban, who of us is safe?"

"Ah, who indeed?" said Tallien, with an ominous shake of his head. "Certainly neither you nor I, Fréron, for Robespierre regards us as his enemies. Let us look the danger squarely in the face, my friend! This Maximilian Robespierre has grown so mighty of late that he can guillotine whomever he chooses. He is the virtual dictator of France; for he has so terrorized the Convention that it is swayed by his absolute will. When he puts a motion, none dare oppose it;

and, if he should appear in the Convention to-morrow and demand our heads, not a member would protest on our behalf."

"Then let us thank God he absents himself from the meetings!" exclaimed Fréron in frightened tones.

"And yet," continued Tallien, in a low, appalling whisper, "his very absence bodes us no good. Do you know what is rumored, Fréron?"

The latter cast a terrified glance at his companion, and shook his head.

"It is reported that Robespierre is meditating a master stroke to rid the Convention of his remaining opponents. You know the process. He will accuse them of treason to the Republic, and hand them over to the Revolutionary Tribunal for trial."

"And that," interrupted Fréron excitedly, "would mean the guillotine for all. *Mon Dieu!* dare no one denounce this tyrant?"

"No one," returned Tallien gravely; "for he is the absolute master in France."

At that moment an orchestra, concealed behind a screen of palms, broke out into the melodious strains of a brisk minuet, and a space was cleared in the ball-room for those who were to take part in the dance. Louise Vauban left her father's side, and, advancing on the arm of one of her most ardent suitors, took her place in the leading set. Others followed her example; more sets were quickly formed, and, at a signal from the bandmaster, the minuet began.

To the uncultured *citoyens* who looked on—the artisans and shopkeepers of Paris—it was an entranc-

ing spectacle. Unaccustomed as they were to the graceful pleasures of polite society, they formed a gaping circle round the dancers, giving expression to their admiration by rude hand-clappings and shouts of approval. To them it seemed that the golden age of equality had indeed arrived, when high and low, rich and poor, should amuse themselves in common.

Lights, music, flowers, lovely laughing faces, sparkling jewels and eyes that outrivalled them in brilliant luster—all contributed to the bewitching effect of the picture. In lightly-unerring gyrations, the dancers swam hither and thither, their faces flushed with excitement, as their forms swayed gracefully in time to the stirring music. They put forth their best efforts to win the applause of the onlookers, but, though they danced well, none approached Louise Vauban in vivacity and charm.

Behold how her pretty foot darts down an inch from her partner's! And now she is off again; she is as a flash of light. Like a glittering comet she travels her ellipse, radiant, fascinating, beautiful. Happiness is in her smile, and delight in the gleam of her dark eyes.

Those who beheld her in that triumphant, joyous mood, afterwards declared that they had never seen any one so light-hearted. Her flow of spirits was so exuberant that it was contagious; and, all unconsciously, the faces of the spectators glowed, and their eyes brightened with sympathetic merriment, as they followed her movements.

Suddenly a harsh voice broke in upon the music, and vague terror filled every heart.

"Is Citizen Vauban present?"

All eyes were turned toward the speaker, and a profound hush fell upon the assemblage, when they beheld an officer of the Municipal Gendarmes standing in the doorway of the ballroom.

"Is Citizen Vauban present?" he repeated.

M. Vauban left the group of friends with whom he was conversing, and advanced toward the intruder with a courteous bow.

"I am Vauban," he said calmly; "what do you wish of me?"

"I have a warrant for your arrest as a suspect," replied the officer curtly. "Come, do not keep my men waiting, for they have other work to do."

While speaking he motioned toward the hall, where six stalwart gendarmes were awaiting his command. For a moment M. Vauban's face paled; then, turning toward his guests with an air of exquisite good breeding, he said tranquilly:

"The Republic requires my presence elsewhere, friends; but do not let my absence damp your pleasures. Continue to enjoy yourselves, and I shall be well content."

Before the murmur of admiration aroused by these words had subsided, his daughter swept majestically across the ballroom and confronted the officer.

"So you have come to arrest my father?" she cried, with flashing eyes. "By whose order, pray? Produce your warrant!"

The officer drew from his pocket a folded document

and placed it in her hands. With trembling fingers she opened it and ran her eyes over its contents.

It was an order for the arrest of Representative Alphonse Vauban, issued by the Committee of Public Safety in session that very evening. Realizing at once that her beloved father was doomed, she tore the document in fragments and stamped upon the pieces. Then, taking her stand in front of him, and drawing herself up to her full height:

"Be gone!" she cried in ringing tones, as she pointed dramatically toward the door.

The officer hesitated, while a faint hum of approbation arose from the assembled guests.

"Louise!" entreated her father gently. "Would you insult the dignity of the Republic? If my arrest has been ordered, my dear child, I would be the last to oppose the authorities. Come, embrace me and let me go!"

His words had the effect of inspiring the officer to action. In the performance of his daily duty, he had become accustomed to scenes like this, and had learned that promptness and severity were the only effectual means of ending them. So he signaled to his men to come forward and do their duty.

Immediately the six gendarmes entered the ballroom silently, and laid rude hands on the beautiful girl. She struggled like a tigress in their grasp, crying out to her lovers and admirers:

"Will you see me insulted, friends? Will no one come to my assistance?"

In the meantime the officer beckoned to M. Vauban, who, casting a look of indescribable yearning upon his child, bowed his head submissively and quietly left the house.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN OF MYSTERY.

On seeing M. Vauban in the custody of their officer, the gendarmes unhanded Louise, and followed them into the street. The frantic girl took a few steps after them, and then, realizing how utterly futile any attempt to join her father would be, turned and staggered back into the ballroom.

She was conscious of a hundred pallid faces turned upon her with looks of blended consternation and pity; of the suppressed hum of excited conversation; then a mist enveloped her senses, and she sank down upon the floor in a swoon.

When she recovered consciousness, and looked around, she observed that the guests, who, but a short time before, were applauding her grace and beauty to the skies, were now quietly and stealthily taking their departure—hurrying away with terror in their hearts from that ill-omened house.

"Take heart, deary!" a kind voice whispered in her ear. "Remember Robespierre is your father's friend and will doubtless save him."

Louise glanced up into the speaker's face, and saw that it was that of Marie, her faithful maid, who had hastened to her assistance.

Under her skilful ministrations the girl quickly revived, and, as she gradually regained control of her faculties, was inspired with a desperate resolution.

"Assist me to arise, Marie," she murmured, "and support me while I speak to our guests."

The faithful creature obeyed, and, helping her mistress to the middle of the great ballroom, wound an arm around her waist and sustained her drooping figure.

"Do not desert me yet, friends," she began faintly; "for there are some among you to whom I would like to address a few words."

If she was beautiful in the moment of her triumphant happiness, she appeared far lovelier now in the moment of her supreme despair. In the struggle with the gendarmes, her magnificent hair had escaped from the bands which confined it, and hung in luxuriant, wavy tresses over her fair shoulders; her face was as white as alabaster and infinitely pathetic in the hopelessness of its expression; while her dark eyes were soft, liquid, and appealing, like those of a sorrowing angel.

Casting them over the cowering creatures about her, as if in search of one true friend, she continued in stronger tones:

"Many here have protested love for me; some have even sworn that they would regard it a privilege to die for me; but hitherto I have loved no man. I had vowed to give all my love to my father. But," she added with sudden energy, "to the man who will save him from the guillotine, I swear to be an obedi-

ent, loving slave to the day of my death. To that man I will give myself, my love, my fortune, most willingly."

She paused and cast another look around, as if expecting to see a dozen suitors spring forward to accept her challenge; but not a single man responded. At last her eyes rested upon the face of her late partner in the minuet, General Juvenal, a gallant young soldier of rising fame in the Revolutionary Army.

"What, Juvenal!" she cried, "can you remain silent after your ardent vows of love to me during the dance? Did you not lay your heart and life at my feet?"

Thus directly appealed to, the young general turned white and smiled faintly.

"My heart and life, it is true, mademoiselle; but not my honor," he answered.

And, with these words, he left the room.

Louise broke into a scornful laugh.

"And yet he claimed to love me!" she cried with a bitter sneer.

Then, observing another of her suitors standing in the alcove of a window, she called out:

"But there stands the gallant D'Espernay, the friend who swore he would go to the guillotine, if I should ask him. Come, D'Espernay, will you endeavor to save my father?"

The man addressed trembled slightly at having his vain boast brought home to him before so many, and stammered out this lame excuse:

"However willingly I would die for you, Mademoiselle Vauban, I am, nevertheless, a loyal son of

the Republic. If your father has failed in his duty, I must respectfully decline to interfere on his behalf."

And D'Espernay also left the room.

Again Louise broke out in laughter, only this time more bitterly and hysterically than before.

"Why, surely," she exclaimed, "this is the very golden age of knight-errantry! And you, M. Villeneuve, what have you to say to my appeal?" she cried a moment after, as she caught sight of still another of her lovers endeavoring to steal unobserved into the hall.

M. Villeneuve shot a frightened glance over his shoulder, and never paused to make answer.

Louise did not laugh this time, for she realized that she was utterly abandoned. Grim terror of Robespierre and his ever-active guillotine had evidently deprived all men of their bravery, and even love itself had become a slave of fear.

In order that the reader may understand this scene, a few words of explanation will be necessary. During the Reign of Terror, when Robespierre was at the height of his power, no man in France could say with confidence that his head was safe. The "Law of the Suspect" was enforced with tremendous vigor, and to be arrested on suspicion meant almost certain death.

Nor was it necessary to commit some overt act against the Republic for one to fall within the scope of this iniquitous measure. Men and women were guillotined for simply expressing a kindly sympathy for the condemned. To weep for a victim of the guil-

lotine, even if the unfortunate person was a near and dear relative, was equivalent to courting death.

Every day, at sunset, the tumbrils, filled with victims, wound their way slowly through the streets of Paris, from the Conciergerie Prison to the place of execution. The guillotine reared its horrible frame over the land, and all men trembled in its shadow.

"Lead me away, Marie," moaned poor Louise faintly, "I can expect no succor here; all my friends have deserted me. Oh, my poor, poor father! What can I do to save you?"

Marie conducted her into a small apartment, adjoining the ballroom, and laid her gently on a sofa. Then she went up into the banquet hall to procure wine and cakes for her refreshment. While returning from this errand, she passed the last of the frightened guests, hurrying toward the door that communicated with the street, and was so enraged at their cowardice that she abused them roundly to their faces.

"Ye scurvy knaves!" she cried, "may the curse of Heaven rest on ye for the way ye have treated my master!"

But, on reaching the side of her young mistress, she, became as gentle and tender as a child. With words of encouragement and hope, she pressed her to eat and drink so earnestly that Louise had not the heart to refuse her.

"And now, deary," said Marie, when her mistress had partaken of some nourishment, "I will take you upstairs to your room, and put you to bed; for you must sleep to gain strength for to-morrow. Then,

bright and early in the morning, we'll go to Robespierre together, and I have no doubt, when he hears of this outrage, he will have your good father set free."

With these words, she put her arms lovingly around the girl's waist, and helped her to rise from the sofa. Then, for the first time, they became conscious of the presence of a third person.

A young man of a frank, noble countenance, was standing in the doorway, in an attitude of profound respect, regarding them with deep interest.

Seeing that the women started back affrighted on beholding him, he reassured them with a pleasant smile, and said, bowing politely:

"Pardon my intrusion! I am a friend who desires to render you a service."

"A friend, monsieur?" exclaimed Louise in astonishment. "Why, I do not even know you!"

"True," answered the unknown in a low, musical voice; "but, Mademoiselle Vauban, you are well known to me. I have long admired you from a distance, conscious that I was utterly unworthy of your acquaintance. Nor would I have ever presumed to seek this interview, were it not for the hope I entertain of aiding you."

Louise examined the stranger's countenance more closely, and was struck with the sincerity it expressed. The open brow, the finely-chiseled features, the firm mouth and chin, and the piercing, blue eyes inspired her with a feeling of confidence; and yet how could

"PARDON MY INTRUSION! I AM A FRIEND WHO DESIRES TO RENDER YOU A SERVICE."—*Page* 24.

this obscure young man assist her in her present desperate emergency?

"Monsieur," she said, "I thank you for your offer; but I fear that my case is beyond your help."

"That remains to be seen," replied the unknown. "Let me explain myself, mademoiselle! I am an obscure person, it is true, and yet I have resources which the greatest men might envy. Being acquainted with your father, I came here at his invitation to-night. I was a witness to his iniquitous arrest, and to the brutal treatment you received at the hands of the gendarmes. My heart prompted me to rush to your rescue, but had I done so all would have been lost.

"I was present in the ballroom, mademoiselle, when you appealed to your craven-hearted admirers to save your father's life. I saw them desert you one by one, and then vowed that I would champion your cause myself.

"Understand, mademoiselle," he continued with rare delicacy, "it was not your offer of yourself and fortune that prompted me to this resolution. It was the deep love and respect I have for you, nothing more. Having come to this determination, therefore, I lingered behind, until the other guests had departed, and I could see you alone. And now, Mademoiselle Vauban, allow me to place myself at your disposal."

Utterly amazed at the generosity of this offer, the girl remained for a while silent. It seemed so odd that she should be befriended by a total stranger, at a time when even those who professed to love her

had failed her, that her mind was completely bewildered. Observing this, the stranger quietly resumed:

"I am not surprised, mademoiselle, that you should doubt the sincerity of my offer, or my ability to save your father's life. Nevertheless, I assure you that I am worthy of your trust, and am by no means as powerless as I appear."

"But who are you?" asked Louise. "What is your name?"

The stranger fixed upon her a look of deep significance, and replied ambiguously:

"I am known as Jean Louvet, and am at present an humble Representative in the National Convention."

"And your politics?" asked Louise. "Are you a Jacobin?"

"My politics," replied the unknown, striking upon his breast with his palm, "are kept locked up here."

The girl pondered a moment doubtfully, and then, overwhelmed with an emotion of sudden gratitude, stretched forth her hand impulsively to the young man, with the fervent exclamation:

"I trust you, M. Louvet, and gratefully accept your brave offer! God grant you may not lose your own head in trying to save my father's!"

He raised the hand she gave him to his lips and kissed it reverently.

"If I perish in your service, mademoiselle, I shall be well content," he answered.

And, with these words, departed from her presence.

CHAPTER III.

ROBESPIERRE.

On the morning following the ball at M. Vauban's, the great Robespierre arose from the bed on which he had tossed through a restless night, and, going over to a window that opened upon the Rue Saint Honoré, drew aside the curtains and looked out.

The hot July sun was already high in the heavens, beating down upon the roofs and pavements of Paris with fierce intensity.

"How my poor head aches!" he muttered, passing a long hand tremulously across his sallow brow. "I feel weak and sick from lack of sleep, and yet I never was in such sore need of all my strength and resolution. The Republic is threatened, and I alone can preserve it. And yet, how?"

He turned from the window with an exclamation of impatience and despair.

"Faugh! I am heartily sick of it all!" he cried. "The guillotine! It is ever the guillotine by which the cause of liberty must be advanced. The guillotine for one's friends even!"

The tears started to his eyes, as he paced nervously back and forth between the door of his chamber and the window, combating with his emotions.

"Poor Vauban!" he exclaimed in a choked voice. Would that I could save you! But the Republic requires your head, and, dear friend though you be, you must perish."

His yellow, bloodshot eyes gleamed with fanaticism as he uttered these words, and his thin lips closed together in an expression of grim resolve. He employed the ensuing quarter of an hour in dressing himself with scrupulous neatness, and then rang for his breakfast.

The meal, which consisted of a single roll, an egg, and a pot of coffee, was brought into the room by his landlord, an humble cabinetmaker who loved him devotedly.

"I trust you slept well during the night," remarked this individual with extreme solicitude, as he placed the frugal repast on the table at which his illustrious tenant had seated himself.

"If I did not," replied Robespierre, with a sickly smile, "it was because my mind was busy in devising plans for the happiness of our beloved country."

"Ah, Monsieur Robespierre!" returned the cabinetmaker admiringly, "you think too little of yourself. You are too self-sacrificing."

Robespierre frowned.

"You forget yourself, my friend, in addressing me as *Monsieur,*" he said sternly. "You should remember that I am simply Citizen Robespierre, the brother of all true Frenchmen. It is a title in which I glory, and you should not deprive me of it. As to sacrificing myself for the Republic," he added with ardor, "it is

no more than my plain duty. If the Commonwealth should require my head to-morrow, I would gladly give it up; or"—and here his voice trembled slightly—"if it is necessary to the public welfare that I should send my dearest friends to the guillotine, I will not hesitate to do so."

He paused to sip his coffee reflectively, while the cabinetmaker stood by, regarding him with adoring reverence. Indeed, it was small wonder that this enigmatical man commanded the affections and confidence of all men of his landlord's class; for he was simple and democratic in his habits, poor, despite his great power and influence, and outspoken in his utterances against oppression.

Although no greater tyrant ever lived, he did not oppress the poor and humble, but retained his sway over their hearts by professing to act always in their interest. Occupying humble lodgings, when he might have resided in a palace, he appeared to them as the ideal ruler of a Commonwealth founded upon the principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, and so they granted him their unqualified support.

Realizing from his tenant's abstracted manner that he desired to be alone, the cabinetmaker was in the act of withdrawing quietly from the room, when a servant appeared in the doorway.

"Two women are waiting below to have a word with you, Citizen Robespierre," she announced.

"Do you know who they are?" he asked suspiciously; for ever since the assassination of his friend, Marat,

by Charlotte Corday, he was cautious in granting interviews to strangers.

"Yes," answered the servant, "I know them. They are Citizeness Vauban and her maid."

Robespierre's sallow face darkened.

"Faugh!" he exclaimed, in tones of annoyance. "I know what their visit means. They have come to plead with me to spare Citizen Vauban. But it is useless; it is necessary that he should die."

He arose from the table with an air of vexation, and resumed his pacing of the apartment. It was evident that the thought of meeting his visitors disturbed him greatly.

"Why will not people leave me alone in the performance of my duty?" he exclaimed. "Why must I be tortured by appeals to my sympathies? It would be, perhaps, best to refuse this audience, since it can only result in pain. And yet," he added, running his long fingers through his hair distractedly, "if I refuse to receive these women, my motives will be cruelly misjudged. I will be accused of sending my friend, Vauban, to the guillotine through sheer envy and malice."

As he uttered these words, the lines of his face hardened suddenly, and, turning to the servant with an imperious gesture, he said coldly:

"Show the women into my parlor, and tell them I will be with them presently."

When the servant had departed, Robespierre went over to a wardrobe, and took from it a sky-blue coat, a white-silk waistcoat embroidered with silver, a pair

of black silk breeches, white silk stockings, and a pair of delicately formed shoes with buckles of gold. For, in spite of his democratic principles, he was by nature a dandy, who always appeared neatly and elegantly attired. In fact, vanity in dress was his prevailing weakness, leading some to suspect that the "Sanscullotism" he professed was not altogether sincere.

Having carefully arrayed himself in these garments, he surveyed his person in the mirror with an air of extreme satisfaction, and then walked briskly into the little parlor where the ladies were awaiting him.

"To what may I attribute the honor of this unexpected visit, Citizeness Vauban?" he asked, as he advanced toward them with a polite bow.

Louise regarded him for a moment with a searching look, and replied, evasively:

"You did not attend our ball last night, M. Robespierre, although it was given in your honor. Why did you absent yourself? Has my father offended you?"

These unexpected inquiries, accompanied as they were by a glance which seemed to penetrate the deepest recesses of his soul, brought a blush to the tyrant's sallow face. He managed to retain his composure, however, and answered:

"My time is not always at my disposal, Citizeness Vauban. I am a servant of the Republic, you must remember."

"And yet," went on Louise, still keeping her beautiful eyes intently fixed on his countenance, "it is to be regretted that you did not honor us with your pres-

ence last night, for you might have prevented a most wicked outrage."

"An outrage?" stammered Robespierre, with an attempt to appear astonished. "What do you mean?"

"Simply this," replied Louise, in calm, deliberate tones. "During the height of the festivities last night, a company of gendarmes entered our house like so many bandits, and dragged your friend, my father, off to prison. If you had been there, M. Robespierre, you would doubtless have saved him," she added ironically.

The crafty tyrant was fully aware of the irony in her last words, but it suited his purpose to ignore it.

"What! my friend Vauban arrested?" he cried, assuming an air of surprise. "And by whose order, pray?"

Still looking him steadily in the face, Louise answered slowly:

"By order of the Committee of Public Safety, of which you are a privileged member."

At this the wily Robespierre suddenly affected an air of alarm and solicitude.

"Why, the affair must be serious," he said gravely. "If the Committee of Public Safety ordered your father's arrest, it must be for some excellent reason. It must be that he has failed in his duty to the Republic."

"Indeed?" sneered the girl bitterly. "If that be so, M. Robespierre, it appears to me that you, his friend, should know of it." Then suddenly casting aside all

hypocrisy, she addressed these bold words to the tyrant:

"It is useless for you to pretend ignorance of this affair, M. Robespierre, for it was you yourself who caused my father's arrest. In some way he has offended you. How, I do not pretend to know. He has lost the protection of your friendship, and is now a prisoner in La Force. I did not come here to inform you of something you already know, but to appeal to the generosity of your nature."

She rose from her seat, and flung herself on her knees at the tyrant's feet.

"Oh, my dear, good, kind M. Robespierre!" she cried, in heartrending tones; "do not let me appeal to you in vain. If my father has offended you in any way, believe me, it was not through intention. He has always loved and respected you, believing that you were his dearest friend. Prove now, that you deserve his trust and affection by saving him from the guillotine. You are great, you are all-powerful, and one word from you will be sufficient. Oh, say that you will save him, and keep my heart from breaking!"

During the whole of this passionate entreaty, Robespierre kept his face averted from that of the girl, as if fearful that his resolution would give way before her beauty. When she paused for his answer, he turned upon her a troubled look and said, with forced calmness:

"You overrate my power, Citizeness Vauban. I am but an humble Representative of the people."

"Yet one whose mere word is absolute law in

France," cried Louise. "Oh, I beseech you to exert your power to save my dear father!"

"But if he is guilty?" returned Robespierre. "Would you have me save him then?"

"Guilty? My father guilty?" almost screamed the girl. "Of what crime does he stand accused? It is said he is a suspect. Suspected of what? Dare any one accuse him of treason to the Republic? Why, such an idea is monstrous; his whole life has been devoted to the cause of liberty."

"You plead for him eloquently," said Robespierre, beginning to soften.

"Because my entreaties are prompted by love," sighed Louise. "And yet," she added despairingly, "of what avail are any words of mine? It was only last night, M. Robespierre, that I appealed to those who professed to love me; who had even sworn that they would die for me. I offered myself as the loving and obedient slave forever to the one who would save my father. Yes, I vowed that I would give myself, my heart, my fortune to the man who would rescue him from death; but it was in vain. One by one they deserted me, and I was left disconsolate and alone."

"And does your offer still hold good?" asked Robespierre, in eager, tremulous tones.

"It still holds good," she answered, looking up into his face with hope and fear in her eyes.

The maid, Marie, who had been a silent witness of this strange scene, observed that a remarkable change had now overspread Robespierre's somber visage. For a brief moment it was transfigured by an expres-

sion of infinite longing. There was a wondrous softness in the look that he fixed upon the girl at his feet, and a happy smile parted his thin lips.

The anxious maid was beginning to hope that her mistress had triumphed over his determination, when the tyrant turned away with a sigh that seemed to rise from his heart's depths, and, bowing his head upon his breast, muttered sternly:

"Robespierre, no weakness."

When he turned toward her mistress a moment later, his bilious face was of a livid, greenish hue, and inflexible in the resolution it expressed.

"Come, Citizeness Vauban," he cried, in a hoarse, hollow voice, "let us put an end to this painful interview! If your father is innocent, it will appear at his trial. If he is guilty, neither you, nor I should raise a finger to save him. The Revolutionary Tribunal will decide his fate."

And, turning on his heel, he hurried from the room.

"Oh, merciful God!" moaned the wretched Louise. "My dear father is lost beyond all hope."

Marie put her arm gently around her waist and whispered:

"Do not despair, my dear mistress. Let us trust to the promise of the stranger."

CHAPTER IV.

JEAN LOUVET.

WHILE this scene was being enacted in the humble lodgings of Robespierre, another, of an equally dramatic character, was taking place in the hall of the National Convention. St. Just—one of Robespierre's closest friends, and a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal—had ascended the tribune to propose a measure instigated by his chief, when an obscure Representative arose from his seat, and shouted in tones that rang through the building like the notes of a bugle:

"I call upon all true Frenchmen to hear me!"

St. Just raised his eyes in astonishment from the written speech he was about to deliver; the members all turned inquiring looks toward the speaker; while President Thuriot extended a hand toward the bell on his desk to ring for order. Before he could give the signal, however, the new voice cried out:

"The time has arrived, my brothers, for this Convention to assert its independence. The citizen who is about to address you is but the servile tool of your oppressor—the mouthpiece of the absent Robespierre. He comes here to propose a measure devised by his

master. He believes you will all vote for it through fear of the man he represents. But will you?"

He paused and cast a look around the hall, where the drop of a pin could have been heard in the profound silence that reigned. President Thuriot seized his bell and rang it violently; but its clanging was drowned in the speaker's vibrant voice, as he resumed, with a gesture of defiance:

"You cannot ring me down, sir; I am determined to be heard. It has long been apparent that this assembly is spellbound with terror of one man. His will is its law. No one dare oppose him. No one, did I say? Ah, in that I was mistaken; for I, Jean Louvet, dare to raise my voice against him. Yes, on the floor of this Convention, that is ruled by the will of Robespierre, I denounce him as a tyrant and demand his accusation!"

Again you might have heard a pin drop, so silent was the hall.

President Thuriot laid down his bell, and sank back in his chair aghast. Men looked into each other's faces, and saw there, as in a mirror, the terror of their own hearts imaged in pallid hues. And yet the majority of Representatives present were in secret sympathy with the speaker.

It was a moment of supreme suspense.

How would the scales move—for, or against, Robespierre? One resolute word was sufficient to decide the issue, and this word was spoken, but, unfortunately, by St. Just.

Realizing that a tremendous crisis was impending, he called out contemptuously:

"Why, the man is mad!" Then, turning to Thuriot, he added, in tones loud enough for all to hear: "I appeal to you, Mr. President, to have this disorderly person removed from the hall, so that we may proceed with our business undisturbed."

These timely words turned the scales in Robespierre's favor. Representatives of all political parties sprang to their feet, shaking their fists at Jean Louvet, and hurling threats and denunciations at his head. The Jacobin members filled the place with tremendous shouts of *"Vive Robespierre! Vive la République!"* while the rabble in the galleries roared approval.

In the midst of this storm, Jean Louvet stood calm and intrepid. His youthful face had become pale, but not through fear. It was because he realized that his daring had failed, and that he must abandon all hope of aid from the Convention.

"Cowards!" he muttered despairingly. "If you had had the heart to support my motion, the tyrant would have perished and M. Vauban's head been saved. I took you for freemen; but have learned that you are slaves. Well, so be it! As slaves and cowards I will henceforth treat you."

He cast a haughty look up at the roaring galleries, a contemptuous glance upon his fellow Representatives, and, with a bow of mock reverence to the President, turned on his heel and left the Convention Hall.

On reaching the street, he walked briskly in the direction of the Faubourg St. Antoine—whose narrow

alleys and ramshackle tenements sheltered the very lowest class of citizens—and never paused, until he reached the door of a little wine shop which stood crowded between two toppling rookeries. Entering this dingy den, with the swagger of an old habitué, he called for a bottle of wine, and took a seat at a table in a corner.

For fully two hours he sat there, sipping from his glass gingerly, and meditating in sullen silence.

What was the nature of his reflections?

To reveal them would be to anticipate the events of this story. It will be sufficient to state, therefore, that during those hours of silent pondering, Jean Louvet had determined upon a plan of action. He had sat down at the table despairing; he arose with hope in his heart; and, going over to the chair in which mine host sat dozing, aroused him with a gentle shake and asked:

"Has Simon the Jailer been in to-day?"

"Not yet," was the sleepy answer; "but he'll be sure to drop in this evening."

"Good!" exclaimed Louvet, heartily; adding, "When you see him, tell him that he is wanted. Can you remember that message?"

"Aye," answered mine host; "but who shall I say wants him?"

"Oh, that is immaterial; he will understand."

The young man fixed his eyes upon a rude painting of the Bastille that hung upon the wall, and examined it with apparent interest. Then he turned again to the landlord and asked carelessly:

"And André the Barber; he also frequents your house, does he not?"

"He comes here every evening."

"Then there is another customer of yours, named François, who does nothing to earn his bread. When do you expect to see him again?"

"Ah, that idler spends most of his time here."

"Well, you may tell them both they are wanted."

And, without deigning to notice the curiosity his words had excited in the landlord, Louvet walked out of the wine shop.

A few steps brought him to a little square, where a crowd of poor wretches had gathered to listen to the violent utterances of a Jacobin demagogue who was spouting the praises of Robespierre.

Fierce looking men, in red caps and fustian jackets, and bloated, disheveled women crowded eagerly around the speaker, blocking the way so completely that it was almost impossible to pass. Louvet was about to turn into an alley to escape the throng, when he heard that which made him pause.

The demagogue was denouncing M. Vauban.

He was giving his audience a graphic description of the ball of the previous night, and drawing his own conclusions as to its significance. He accused M. Vauban of being an aristocrat at heart, whose professions of republicanism were hypocritical. The entertainment, he said, was proof positive of this, for it was princely in its magnificence and display. A true republican would never have indulged in such vain luxury.

The incorruptible Robespierre, however, had seen through the designs of the traitor. He had recognized that M. Vauban wished to excite others to emulate his grandeur, and so undermine the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity upon which the fabric of the Republic had been built. Therefore, Robespierre had caused M. Vauban's arrest, and he was now a prisoner in La Force, awaiting, in fear and trembling, the decree that would send him to the guillotine.

Pausing a moment, until the savage howl of approval which followed this announcement had subsided, the demagogue changed the theme of his harangue.

He now called his hearers' attention to the scene in the Convention that morning. Louvet could not restrain a smile, on hearing himself described as a mean and cowardly traitor who had tried to instigate his associates to rebellion. His smile broadened when he heard the demagogue declare that he was an assassin who wished to murder the great Robespierre.

But his face sobered and his heart sank, a moment afterwards, when the Jacobin informed his hearers that Jean Louvet had been accused of treason on leaving the Convention Hall, and that a price had been set upon his head.

As he was well known in the Faubourg St. Antoine, where he had posed as an ardent revolutionist, he instantly realized the danger of his position. Although sent to the Convention from a remote district of France, he had associated extensively with the lower classes in Paris, and especially with the residents of

St. Antoine. In fact, it would be impossible for him to travel through its shortest street without encountering an acquaintance. Yet, here he was, in the very heart of the Faubourg, surrounded by a crowd of its inhabitants.

What should he do?

For a moment he was so overcome with terror that it was impossible for him to come to a decision. Recognition at that moment meant certain destruction; for the savage people around him, lashed to fury by the Jacobin, would tear him limb from limb on the spot.

Fortunately, however, the attention of every one in the crowd was just now riveted upon the speaker, and Jean Louvet had a chance to collect his wits. Realizing the necessity of leaving the perilous spot at once, he drew off quietly from the outskirts of the throng, and glided stealthily into a narrow alley.

"It is probable," he thought, "that the news of my doings in the Convention is not widely known as yet. If I can only escape from this neighborhood, all may still be well."

He increased his gait to a brisk walk. Every step that took him further from the crowd added to his hope and confidence. He passed by several stragglers, but fortunately they were strangers.

All at once he came within sight of another little square, and was dismayed to see that here also a crowd had gathered. For what purpose? A few steps nearer settled all doubts; for he beheld a second Jacobin orator, mounted upon the top of a wine cask,

addressing the throng in a hoarse, bawling voice, accompanied by the wildest gestures.

With a fluttering heart Jean Louvet crept nearer, until he could hear each word the fellow uttered. The Jacobin was denouncing him as a traitor. Like the demagogue he had previously heard, this speaker was describing to his hearers the occurrences in the Convention that morning, calling upon them to support the incorruptible Robespierre, and to crush all his opponents.

Jean Louvet crept stealthily into the shelter of a dark hallway to reflect. Now that he knew the full extent of his peril he was no longer terrified; but could look the situation squarely in the face, with all the resolution and courage that characterized his nature.

"I see how matters stand clearly enough," he mused. "It is apparent that my defiance of Robespierre this morning has produced a greater effect than I supposed. It has awakened his supporters to a realization that he has many enemies in the Convention who are only held in check by fear. So his friends, the Jacobins, dreading lest my daring might lead others to emulate my example, had me accused of treason immediately after I had left the hall. Then, after having fixed a price upon my head, they sent their orators among the people to stir them up to a demonstration in the tyrant's favor. In this way they hope to prove to his opponents that he has the support of the citizens of Paris, and so frighten them into a more complete subjection to his will.

"It is shrewd politics," he reflected further; "but I will outwit them yet, provided I can escape from my present peril, and reach a safe retreat. But how am I to accomplish this? Not by skulking and hiding in this wretched quarter; for all its inhabitants are by this time inflamed against me. There is but one course to pursue. I must go boldly forth, face the people with stern courage, and trust to God to carry me safely through."

Thereupon he left the hallway, and, humming the Marseillaise nonchalantly, walked briskly down the alley.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE RABBLE'S MERCY.

JEAN LOUVET had proceeded but a short distance, when he arrived at a street that intersected the narrow lane at right angles. He paused for a moment to decide which way he should turn; then wheeled quickly to the right and hastened on.

It was his intention to reach his lodgings as soon as possible, in order to procure certain important documents he kept there, before the gendarmes arrived to arrest him; but, on further reflection, he determined to abandon this purpose; for it was imperative for him to seek a hiding place at once.

On the confines of St. Antoine, in a winding street hemmed in by squalid tenements, stood a very ancient dwelling known as the Maison Rousseau, out of compliment to the illustrious philosopher of that name who had once made it his residence. Its present occupant was a learned physician, Dr. Narbonne, of the most pronounced revolutionary principles, and consequently very popular with the people.

It was said that he was exceedingly benevolent, and that he had turned his house into a hospital for the infirm. At least it was known that many persons,

besides himself, lived in the Maison Rousseau, and, as he said they were his patients, no one doubted it.

It was to this venerable mansion that Jean Louvet was hurrying, when he suddenly encountered an acquaintance who called upon him to halt.

"*Bon jour,* Citizen Louvet!" exclaimed the fellow, blocking the way with his body. "So you have not escaped us after all?"

The young man shot a quick glance at his questioner, and recognized Jacques the Blacksmith, one of the most sanguinary wretches in the Faubourg, who had figured conspicuously in the prison massacres of September, '92.

The savage aspect of the man deprived him of all hope; nevertheless he forced a smile to his lips and replied composedly:

"Ah, friend Jacques, so it is you? I thank you for your kind greeting and return it cordially."

While speaking he attempted to pass on; but the man would not permit it.

"Not so fast, my worthy Representative," he snarled, with a sarcastic leer. "I must have a word with you. I heard that you made a great speech in the Convention this morning, and have become suddenly famous. I congratulate you on behalf of St. Antoine!"

As he uttered these words, he squared himself menacingly before Louvet, with his great, half-bared arms akimbo, and his red cap pulled down over one eye.

"I must deceive this fellow, or I am lost," reflected Louvet. Then, affecting an air of surprise, he said

aloud: "Why, Jacques, you bewilder me. I make a speech and become famous? Nonsense, man! Some one has been joking you."

His manner was so sincere that the blacksmith was puzzled, and it is probable that he would have let the young man pass on, if he had not, at that moment, caught sight of his informant coming down the street.

"I'll soon find out whether I've been joked or not," he growled fiercely; "for here comes the very man who told me the story. Why, blast him! he said you had defied Robespierre, and that a price had been set upon your head."

Casting a look over his shoulder, Louvet saw a burly laborer swaggering toward them. In the same glance he descried, at the end of the street, a crowd of people approaching, waving their arms frantically above their heads, and rending the air with their cries. It was evident that the meeting in the square he had just left had broken up, and that a part of the disorderly assemblage was approaching.

His position was truly appalling.

On one side, he was hemmed in by a brawny giant, one blow of whose powerful fist would suffice to kill him; on the other, by an infuriated mob, clamoring for his destruction. Escape seemed impossible, yet he did not despair. Turning to the blacksmith with a gay laugh, he said good-humoredly:

"Well, Jacques, it appears that your friend has been playing his joke on all the Faubourg; for here come the inhabitants of the quarter to applaud me."

His air was so easy and frank that Jacques, who

had obtained his information only at second hand, began to believe that he had indeed been made the victim of a joke. Until that morning he had been an ardent admirer of the young Representative, who had always treated him as a brother and an equal.

Like other fanatics of the period, while bloodthirsty in his zeal against those he regarded as enemies of the Republic, he was willing at any time to lay down his life to protect the innocent. And now that he had it in his power to either save, or destroy Jean Louvet, he found himself incapable of deciding.

In the meantime his friend, the laborer, was drawing nearer, with the crowd of maddened citizens not far behind. He observed that Jean Louvet was gazing upon them with an innocent smile, like one unconscious of wrong-doing.

Was he innocent or guilty?

Should he urge him to escape, or deliver him over to the mob's fury?

He had but a few moments to decide.

"Citizen Louvet," he asked suddenly, in strangly appealing tones, "will you promise to answer truthfully what I ask you?"

Louvet, who at that moment was meditating a desperate rush for liberty, noticed the change in his voice, and replied, artfully:

"Why, Jacques, have I ever told you a lie?"

"No, you have not," answered the blacksmith quickly, "and that is why I trust you now. Are you a true friend of the people?"

The young man looked him full in the eyes, and answered:

"There is none truer."

"Then you are my brother, and I will protect you," cried the blacksmith, eagerly. "Listen! The crowd you see yonder are not coming to cheer you as you think, but to tear you limb from limb; for your enemies have been spreading lies about you through the Faubourg. They have denounced you as a traitor, accused by the Convention, and with a price upon your head. Now, begone! and leave the neighborhood as quickly as you can, or I would not give one sou for your life."

Louvet pressed the sinewy hand he extended warmly, and hurried on. He knew that his perils were not yet over, in fact, that only a short respite had been granted him; for in a few moments the laborer would come up with the blacksmith, and then the truth would be revealed.

So he quickened his pace almost to a run, looking to the right and left for a street or alley into which he could turn, and, once out of sight of his enemies, fly like the wind.

But not a break appeared in the solid row of tenements before him.

Presently he heard the sound of voices in eager consultation in his rear, and, throwing a hasty glance over his shoulder, saw that the laborer and the blacksmith had met.

"Nothing can save me now but speed," he muttered, and broke into a run.

Being a light and active man, and somewhat of an athlete, Jean Louvet never for a moment doubted that he could soon distance his pursuers. Indeed, his chief peril now lay before him, rather than behind. For it was probable that any one coming from an opposite direction, seeing him running at his topmost speed with a crowd of howling pursuers in his rear, would regard him as a fugitive from justice, and endeavor to head him off.

He had not gone a great distance when this thing actually occurred.

He had reached a bend in the street, and was in the act of turning it, when three men, in red caps and blouses, came sauntering out of a wine shop about one hundred yards ahead. The mob was now in full cry after him, with Jacques and the laborer in the lead, shouting:

"Stop the traitor! Head him off! Stop him!"

Hearing the tumult, the three men turned, and, seeing the fugitive suddenly dash into sight round the bend, spread themselves across the narrow way to head him off.

By this time the wild clamor of the chase had aroused the whole neighborhood; windows on both sides of the way were thrown open with a clatter, and heads were thrust out; men and women rushed out of doors and hallways excitedly; pedestrians turned in their path to join in the pursuit, and even the gamins of the quarter paused in their play in the gutters to hurl stones and mud at the luckless man.

It seemed to Jean Louvet that all Paris had risen against him.

As he drew nearer to the men who blocked his path, he collected his energies for one supreme effort. If he could break through them, he might yet escape; so he determined to make the attempt.

Veering into the middle of the street, he bent low, and, rushing headlong against the man who stood there to oppose him, caught him suddenly around the thighs, and threw him over his shoulder. Then, before the other men could come to the assistance of their fallen comrade, he dashed on.

Another peril passed.

Hope now began to animate the young man's heart; for he saw, not far ahead, a narrow lane that led into a labyrinth of winding alleys. Confident that, if he could once reach this maze, he could easily elude his pursuers, he put forth a terrific burst of speed that elicited a shout of baffled rage from his foes. For these human bloodhounds instantly divined his purpose, and realized that he might escape them yet.

Suddenly, to their amazement, Jean Louvet came to a dead halt, and, folding his arms quietly across his chest, calmly awaited their approach.

Why?

From the lane toward which he was hurrying, a mob was now pouring, giving vent to mad shouts of vengeance, and completely blocking the way. It was apparent that a third Jacobin meeting had been held somewhere in the vicinity, and that the people who had attended it were returning to their homes.

Two dense walls of humanity were now pressing in upon Louvet from opposite directions, and he had no choice but to bravely await the moment when they would meet together and crush him.

"I am lost," he groaned, despairingly, "and with me all hope of saving M. Vauban."

Presently one of his pursuers came up to him and seized him roughly.

"Ah, you vile traitor!" he panted, fiercely. "You are caught at last."

"Caught, yes," he answered, resolutely; "but not proved a traitor as yet. I demand a trial."

At this moment, Jacques the blacksmith rushed up.

"You lying aristocrat!" he howled, with a murderous gleam in his wolfish eyes. "You cheated me, you betrayed my trust, and I will tear your heart out!"

Drawing a huge, hooked knife from his belt, he was about to plunge it into his victim's breast, when a third pursuer arrived upon the scene, and seized his uplifted arm.

"Lunatic! what are you about?" he cried, quickly. "Would you slay an innocent man?"

Louvet turned toward his preserver in amazement, and recognized François the Idler, for whom he had left a message at the wine shop.

CHAPTER VI.

A CONFERENCE IN THE MAISON ROUSSEAU.

JACQUES the Blacksmith let his arm drop slowly to his side, and threw upon François a glance of blank astonishment.

"Innocent?" he asked, pointing a threatening forefinger at Jean Louvet. "This traitor innocent?"

"He is no more a traitor than you are, Jacques," answered François, boldly; "but a sturdy friend of the Republic whom we must save."

"But he stands accused of treason by the Convention," gasped the wondering blacksmith. "And, if he is not guilty, why has a price been fixed upon his head?"

François laughed scornfully.

"Ignorant fool! Know you not there are two Representatives of this man's name in the National Convention?"

The blacksmith's lower jaw dropped. For a moment he stood silent, looking from Louvet to his preserver, and back again in a half stupefied way; then he asked, bewilderedly:

"How can that be?"

"Listen, and I will explain!" answered François, hurriedly; for the angry mob was now close at hand,

and every second was precious. "The man who defied Robespierre this morning was not the noble patriot, Jean Louvet, but a vile traitor of a similar name who represents a district in the department of Lyons. The man before you spells his name L-o-u-v-e-t. The wretch accused by the Convention spells his L-u-v-e-t. Their baptismal names are the same, which accounts for the grave mistake that has been made; but here comes the crowd," he added, as the people surged furiously around them. "Let us do what we can to protect this innocent man from their rage!"

It was fortunate for the hero of this narrative that Jacques the Blacksmith was a power in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Otherwise, he would undoubtedly have been torn to pieces by the enraged populace before a word could have been spoken in his defense. As it was, the credulous monster, whom François had so artfully converted into his protector, was obliged to cover him with his huge body, and imperil his life on his behalf.

Jean Louvet was conscious of being tossed from side to side, as the infuriated mob pressed resistlessly about them. He felt his frame clasped tightly in the huge arms of the giant blacksmith. He heard the roar of his protector's voice bellowing protestations of his innocence; caught confused glimpses of fiendish faces crowned by filthy red caps; of waving clubs, gleaming knives, and glittering axes.

Then, believing that his last moment had come, he muttered a fervent prayer, closed his eyes and waited.

At this crisis a trumpet voice rang out above the tumult:

"Would you stain your hands with innocent blood, my brothers? This man is not the one you seek. Jean Luvet is in prison."

The crowd ceased yelling and fell back, while a stockily-built man, attired in the garb of a municipal jailer, pushed his way to Louvet's side.

Reopening his eyes, to see who this new preserver might be, the young man could hardly credit his senses on beholding Simon the Jailer, for whom he had inquired at the wine shop.

By what marvelous coincidence had these two men arrived in such a timely manner to his rescue? A few words will explain:

Earlier in the morning, they had met in the Faubourg—the jailer being off duty at the time—and, while visiting the different wine shops, had fallen in with one of the Jacobin gatherings. There they had learned of Jean Louvet's defiance of Robespierre, and of the peril which threatened him in consequence. So they agreed to seek him out and warn him. Then they separated and went different ways, not, however, before François had suggested that it would be well to spread the report that a mistake had been made by the orators, who, in denouncing Jean Louvet to the people, had intended to denounce Jean Luvet, a Representative well known to be opposed to the government.

This report, he argued, would readily be credited on account of the similarity in the men's names, and,

if Jean Louvet should visit St. Antoine before they could warn him, might result in saving him from instant death.

On separating, chance led them in opposite directions; so that François the Idler found himself in the crowd that afterward gave chase to Jean Louvet, while Simon the Jailer became one of the mob which subsequently issued from the lane ahead of him to bar the way of his escape. Naturally, on discovering who the fugitive was, they both rushed forward to his rescue, François arriving at his side in time to prevent his assassination by the blacksmith, and Simon to save him from massacre by the people.

On seeing that his ringing shouts had caused the crowd to hesitate, Simon followed up his advantage with vigor.

"Fellow citizens!" he exclaimed. "It is apparent that an overruling Providence directed my steps hither to save you from murdering an innocent man. It is true that a Representative of a like name was accused by the Convention this morning, and that a price was set upon his head. But, brothers, he is in the Luxembourg Prison, where I locked him up myself this morning. You all know me, do you not? I am Simon the Jailer, and you are aware that I never stoop to lie. So when I tell you that Jean Louvet, the man whose life you have been seeking, is not Jean Luvet, the traitor, who now lies in prison for his crimes, I trust you will let this patriot go in peace."

A moment of silent suspense followed, and then a voice cried out:

"But who is this other Jean Luvet you speak of? I never heard of him."

Before Simon could make answer, another voice replied:

"Then I would advise you to read your *Moniteur* more carefully. For my part, I know the man to whom Simon refers well." Then raising his voice, so that all might hear, he added: "It is apparent that this man is innocent, citizens. The traitor denounced by the orators must be Jean Luvet from the department of Lyons, as Simon the Jailer says; for we all know his anti-revolutionary principles. I think we owe some apology, therefore, to the citizen we have so grievously wronged."

A tremendous cheer greeted this proposal, and every one pressed forward to shake Jean Louvet's hand. In fact, he now found himself in almost as much peril from the crowd's demonstrations of affection, as he had been, but a short time before, from its fury. After a while, however, his two preservers succeeded in extricating him from the throng, and then all three made off together in the direction of the Maison Rousseau.

When they were out of hearing of the people, Louvet asked his companions:

"Did you receive my message?"

"No," they answered. "Where did you leave it?"

"With the landlord of the wine house you both frequent. However, since we are together, I will deliver it in person. I want you both to attend a conference to-night."

"At the Maison Rousseau?"

"Of course, that is understood."

"Well, you can trust me to be there," said Simon.

"And me also," echoed François.

"But whither are you going now?" asked Louvet anxiously.

"To the nearest possible hiding place," responded François. "We have saved you by employing a ruse which may be detected at any moment. So we must make the most of our time."

"Then let us hasten to the Maison Rousseau," said Louvet. "For it is there the conference is to be held."

His companions offering no objections to this suggestion, they proceeded toward Dr. Narbonne's residence at a lively walk. When they came within sight of it, they turned aside into a narrow lane which led to a garden in the rear. In this way they succeeded in reaching the back of the mansion unobserved, and, knocking at a secret door, were admitted into the interior.

After seeing Louvet safe in this place of refuge, his preservers took their departure by the same way they had come, one to return to his duty in the Luxembourg Prison, and the other to resume his vocation as an idler. Jean watched them through a window, until they disappeared from view, and then walked quickly upstairs to Dr. Narbonne's study, and rapped for admittance.

"Who's there?" asked a cheery voice from within.

" 'Tis the chief," answered Louvet, "May I enter?"

Without pausing to answer, Dr. Narbonne hurried to the door and flung it wide open.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed fervently, as he clasped Louvet to his heart. "How did you manage to get here, my dear young master? I heard of what happened this morning, and feared that you had been killed. May God be praised for your escape!"

Jean returned his embrace with equal fervor, and, after closing and locking the door of the study, they drew chairs to opposite sides of a table, and began to converse earnestly together. After describing his adventures in St. Antoine, and his rescue from the rabble by his friends, Jean added confidently:

"The conclusions I have drawn from these events are most encouraging. Let me state them. In the first place, I am convinced that Robespierre sways the National Convention through fear. Secondly, although he has the support of the people now, if their eyes can be opened to his tyranny, they will become his implacable enemies. Thirdly, he is at present popular with the National Guard and the Municipal Gendarmes, and this enables him to wield an immense power. But, if these forces could be made to understand that Robespierre employs them as the instruments of his despotism, they would turn against him to a man."

"But the Jacobin Club?" interposed Dr. Narbonne. "His influence with that body is unassailable."

"True," answered Louvet; "but the Jacobins' power is fast waning in France. Indeed, Robespierre is their

chief prop and support. Take him away, and the Jacobin Club would soon fall to pieces."

"But you have forgotten the Revolutionary Tribunal, and the Commitees," said Dr. Narbonne. "They are composed of Robespierre's friends—St. Just, Couthon and other uncompromising Jacobins."

"No," answered Louvet, gravely, "they have not escaped my mind. I appreciate fully that they are the real governing bodies of France, before which the National Convention bows submissively. I learned that sad fact this morning."

Dr. Narbonne cast a look of loving admiration upon the young man, and shook his head protestingly.

"Ah, that rash speech of yours was a mistake," he said. "What prompted you to make it?"

"Necessity," was the emphatic answer.

"Necessity?" echoed his companion archly. "Come, confide in me, my dear master! Were you not actuated in some measure by the arrest of M. Vauban?"

Jean Louvet's handsome face reddened as he replied, confusedly:

"What makes you think that?"

"Because I know you are M. Vauban's friend," returned Dr. Narbonne. "Because I am acquainted with all that occurred at the ball last night. I am informed that Mademoiselle Louise Vauban appealed to her admirers, after her father's arrest, offering herself and fortune to the man who would save him."

"True, but the cowards abandoned her to a man!" cried Jean, with infinite scorn. "Being there myself, I know whereof I speak."

The worthy doctor regarded the young man with an amused smile.

"And being there yourself," he resumed, "and being also an admirer of the beautiful Louise, you volunteered to assist her in her distress. Come, confess the truth, dear master! for I know your chivalrous nature."

Jean blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Since you have guessed my secret," he stammered, with a confused laugh, "I will attempt concealment no longer. It is true, Dr. Narbonne, that I love Louise Vauban. It is true that I volunteered to save her father, and it is also true that my rash speech, as you call it, was made in her father's behalf."

"But what did you hope to accomplish by it?" asked the doctor.

"Robespierre's downfall!" exclaimed the young man, striking the table with his clenched fist. "I hoped that a majority in the Convention would support me; but now I see that I was mistaken."

"And would the fall of Robespierre save M. Vauban?"

"He can be saved in no other way. It was Robespierre who caused his arrest, and it will be Robespierre who will have him guillotined. Therefore, if M. Vauban is to be saved, it must be done by removing the tyrant."

"And you still hope to accomplish this result?"

"I do," was the emphatic answer, "and by employing his own weapons against himself. As his power is the result of terror, through terror he must fall."

His companion regarded him with a perplexed look.

"I do not understand you in the least," he said.

"Then let me explain," answered Louvet: "It is an undeniable fact that Robespierre sways the National Convention through fear, notwithstanding that the majority of Representatives detest him. Now, if these men can be inspired with a greater terror than Robespierre can command, they will rise in a body and denounce him."

"And you really hope to bring this thing to pass?"

"The future will reveal my plans," was the reply.

CHAPTER VII.

ROBESPIERRE'S RISE TO POWER.

WHENEVER mention is made of the French Revolution, three terrible names are immediately suggested to the mind. Let them be printed in capitals to emphasize the obloquy attached to them!

MARAT, DANTON, ROBESPIERRE.

Of the three, Marat was the most bloodthirsty; Danton the most violent; Robespierre the most implacable and despotic.

Concerning the former, who first attracted public attention by editing an incendiary journal entitled "THE FRIEND of the PEOPLE," Lamartine writes that he was "the fury of the Revolution. He had the clumsy tumblings of the brute in his thought, and its gnashings of teeth in his style. His journal smelt of blood in every line." In short, he pandered to the rage and licentiousness of the most abandoned classes, was despicable in his immoralities, and richly deserved the fate meted out to him by the heroic Charlotte Corday.

As regards Danton, Carlyle has found much in his character to admire. He portrays him as a man

whose naturally strong passions were warped by the conditions of his time; ferocious toward his opponents, yet not devoid of generosity toward individuals. The celebrated Madame Roland, his bitter political enemy, best describes him:

"I never saw any countenance that so strongly expressed the violence of brutal passions, and the most astonishing audacity, half disguised by a jovial air, an affectation of frankness, and a sort of simplicity, as Danton's. In 1778 he was a needy lawyer, more burdened with debts than causes. He went to Belgium to augment his resources, and, after the 10th of August, had the hardihood to avow a fortune of 158,333 pounds, and to wallow in luxury, while preaching *sans cullotism*, and sleeping on heaps of slaughtered men." "Danton," says Mignet, "was a gigantic revolutionist. He deemed no means censurable so they were useful. He has been termed the Mirabeau of the populace. Mirabeau's vices were those of a patrician. Danton's those of a democrat. He was an absolute exterminator, without being personally ferocious; inexorable toward masses, humane toward units."

But, although history has arrived at a fairly just estimate of the character of both Marat and Danton, Robespierre remains to-day, as ever, an enigma. His morals were irreproachable; no bribes could corrupt him; he seems to have been sincere in his endeavors to establish a Republic founded upon the basis of popular liberty and virtue; for self-aggrandisement apparently never entered into his aims. Although he

was not a blood-thirsty man, he was ever ready, with frigid mercilessness, to crush anybody who stood in the way of his designs. His soul appears to have been almost as insensible to any generous emotion, as was the blade of the guillotine he employed so freely.

"Robespierre," said Napoleon at St. Helena, "was by no means the worst character who figured in the French Revolution. He opposed trying the queen. He was not an atheist; on the contrary he had publicly maintained the existence of a Supreme Being in opposition to many of his colleagues. Neither was he of the opinion that it was necessary to exterminate all priests and nobles, like many others. Marat, for example, maintained that it was necessary that six hundred thousand heads should fall. Robespierre wanted to proclaim the king an outlaw, and not to go through the ridiculous mockery of trying him. Robespierre was a fanatic, a monster, but he was incorruptible, and incapable of robbing, or causing the deaths of others, either from personal enmity, or a desire of enriching himself. He was an enthusiast; but one who really believed that he was acting right, and died not worth a sou."

As all three of these despots mounted to power through the influence they exerted in the Jacobin Club, a brief history of the foundation and rise to authority of this famous political organization will here be necessary.

When Louis XVI. and his beautiful young queen, Marie Antoinette, ascended the throne of France, the measureless extravagance of the court had plunged

the nation into inextricable financial embarrassment. The whole burden of the taxes—for the support of the throne, the nobles, the church and the army—fell with tremendous weight upon the unprivileged classes alone, sinking them to the lowest condition of poverty, debasement and misery.

Taxes were placed upon everything.

There was hardly an occupation in which a man could engage which was not taxed to almost a prohibitory limit. Tax-gatherers, to the number of two hundred thousand, employed the most cruel expedients to deprive the starving people of their substance. Galleys, gibbets, dungeons, racks—all were called into requisition. When the corn was absorbed, the cattle were taken. The ground, exhausted for want of manure, became sterile. Men, women and children yoked themselves to the plow. The most fruitful regions gradually became reduced to deserts; the population died off, and beautiful France was fast becoming but a place of graves.

Just at this time the American War of Independence broke out. It was the struggle of a heroic people against unjust taxation. The unprivileged classes of France were aroused to enthusiasm on behalf of the revolutionists; and, when the American delegation appeared in Paris, headed by Franklin, all hearts were swept along by a current which neither king, nor nobles could withstand.

While the war between Great Britain and her colonies lasted, the people of France made no overt demonstrations to escape from their bondage; but, when

the Americans had succeeded in wresting their independence from their king, the seeds of liberty began to germinate and bear fruit in the breasts of their French sympathizers. Grumblings and expressions of discontent were heard on all sides; while, at intervals, the people broke out in open rebellion against their oppressors. Such were the prevailing conditions, when the soldiers, who had served in America under Rochambeau and Lafayette, returned to their homes, and, mingling with their countrymen, inflamed their desire for freedom.

In May, 1778, Louis XVI., by the advice of his ministers, determined to issue an edict to render useless the Parliament in Paris, and the twelve Parliaments in the other departments of France. In some way tidings of his intention reached these bodies, and the members resolved to resist the measure to the last gasp. A deputation of twelve was sent from the Parliament of Breton, with a remonstrance to the king at Versailles. They were all consigned to the Bastille. A second deputation, much larger, was sent. Agents of the king met them, and, by threats and menaces, drove them back. A third, still more numerous, was appointed to approach Versailles by different roads. The king refused to receive them. At this, they held a meeting in Paris, and invited La Fayette and all patriotic Bretons in the city to advise with them.

This was the origin of the Jacobin Club.

The organization was first known as the Breton Club, and was composed of the patriotic members of

the National Assembly. After the removal of this body to Paris, however, the club held its meetings in an old, smoky convent of the Jacobin monks, and was hence called the Jacobin Club. It now admitted members indiscriminately, until it numbered twelve hundred in Paris alone. Its affiliated clubs were established in every part of France, and were filled with the most ardent advocates of reform. In less than two years, these branch organizations numbered two thousand four hundred societies in as many towns. Meanwhile the principles advocated by the Jacobins became so fiercely democratic that La Fayette and others of the more conservative patriots withdrew from their tumultuous gatherings.

Indeed the Jacobins were rapidly assuming the reins of government by marshaling the mob to their support. By wielding this resistless weapon, the club soon became the relentless and despotic sovereign of France, more relentless and more despotic than any single sovereign who ever sat upon the throne.

It will be remembered that, as the French Revolution progressed, Louis XVI. and his consort, alarmed at the attitude of the people, deemed it expedient to escape from Paris in disguise, and drive off rapidly toward the frontier. Unfortunately, they were recognized and arrested at Varennes, and brought back as prisoners to the capital.

Reference is made to this episode, because it afforded the Jacobin Club the opportunity of becoming the most formidable power in France. On the morning after the king's flight, Marat, one of its most popular

and energetic members, issued a furious proclamation to the populace of Paris. Similar impassioned appeals were issued by the Jacobin journals throughout the country, and the entire nation was roused to frenzy. The king was denounced as a traitor, plotting the destruction of his subjects, and Marat became the idol of the nation.

This despicable wretch now openly advocated the annihilation of royalty. Others followed his example. The new doctrine spread with marvelous rapidity among the lower orders of Paris, and very speedily gained ascendency among the Jacobins. On the 23rd of June, 1791, Danton mounted the tribune of the club, and demanded, in an outburst of fiery eloquence, the forfeiture of the throne.

"Your king," said he, "is either a knave, or an idiot. If we must have one of the two, who would not prefer the latter?"

His utterances were received with the wildest demonstrations of applause. Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were overwhelmed with a torrent of insults and objurgations, and it was apparent that their fate was sealed.

It was not until the memorable tenth of August, 1792, however, that they were forced to abdicate the throne. Three days later, the king and his family were consigned to the gloomy fortress of the Temple, where they were held as prisoners until the execution of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette upon the guillotine.

The sway of the Jacobin Club over the destinies of France was now absolute.

Danton was named Minister of Justice; the bloodthirsty Marat was appointed President of a committee of "surveillance," which established a terrible system of espionage and domiciliary visitation in Paris, under pretence of preventing conspiracies against the State; while Robespierre, who was now rapidly rising to power, was offered the presidency of a special criminal tribunal, instituted for the trial of all persons accused of sharing in such conspiracies. He declined the honor, however, as being incompatible with his duties as the leading member of the Commune of Paris.

The Republic of France dates properly from the first meeting of the National Convention, on the 21st of September, 1792. On that day Collot d'Herbois proposed the motion that royalty should be forever abolished, and that from the 21st of September, 1792, should begin the year One of the French Republic.

On the 21st of January, 1793, Louis XVI. perished upon the guillotine, amid the wildest demonstrations of joy on the part of the spectators, who rent the air with prolonged shouts of *"Vive la République! Vive la Liberte!"*

The inevitable and immediate result of his execution was to plunge the nation into a bitter strife of political factions. The National Convention was divided into two strong parties: the Girondists and the Jacobins. One of the first great advantages gained by the latter was the establishment, on the 10th of March, 1793, of the Revolutionary Tribunal—the most execrable en-

gine of lawless oppression and cruelty that ever disgraced a civilized nation. The Jacobins followed this up by the appointment, on the 27th of May, of the terrible "Committee of Public Safety," consisting of nine members, Barrere and Danton being the most influential. The whole revolutionary power was lodged in their hands. They appointed such sub-committees as they pleased, held their deliberations in secret, and governed France with terrific energy. They were empowered to take whatever measures they deemed necessary to the welfare of the Republic, and issued warrants for the arrest and imprisonment of all suspected persons. The Jacobins, by controlling these two governing bodies, gained a decisive victory over the Girondist, and sent thirty-two of their number to the guillotine.

It was during this strife that Charlotte Corday, an enthusiastic admirer of the Girondists, set out from Caen to Paris, and, having obtained an interview with the sanguinary Marat, stabbed him to the heart as he lay in his bath.

After the downfall of the Girondists, the Jacobins were driven by the necessities of their position to establish a system of sanguinary despotism, to which no parallel can be found in history. Their reign will be known to the remotest ages as the "Reign of Terror."

Maximilian Robespierre was chosen a member of the Committee of Public Safety, in July, 1793; and, from that time, its proceedings were marked by a degree of firmness, activity, and systematic vigor, which, if displayed in a good cause, would have been

worthy of high commendation. His principal colleagues in this terrible secret conclave were Barrere, Carnot, Couthon, St. Just and Billaud-Varennes. Among other arbitrary measures which they enforced was the famous *"loi des suspects,"* which virtually placed the liberty and property of the whole population of France at the disposal of the government, and soon filled the prisons with upward of two hundred thousand miserable captives.

The Revolutionary Tribunal was brought into constant requisition, and the scaffolds reeked with the blood of victims of all ages, classes and conditions. The first remarkable personage to be executed was General Custine; the second was the unfortunate queen, Marie Antoinette, who died, with touching serenity and magnanimity on the 16th of October, 1793. The despicable Egalité; the enthusiastic and noble-hearted Madame Roland; the unsuccessful generals Houchard, Brunet and Lauzun; and the notorious Madame du Barry, so long the reigning mistress of Louis XV.—all suffered in turn under the fatal knife. Nor were the executions confined to persons of prominence only. Hundreds of humble citizens were immolated for the all-comprehensive crime of hostility to the Republic. Lisping children and decrepit octogenarians shared the same fate. The two extremes of life, the cradle and the grave, met upon the scaffold of the guillotine.

In the meantime, Robespierre was rapidly acquiring despotic power. He controlled the Committee of Public Safety, and his democratic principles, humble

mode of life and incorruptible honesty rendered him the idol of the populace. Hebert, a low, impudent and corrupt Terrorist, who exercised the chief sway over the Commune of Paris, made a furious assault on the Christian religion, the very profession of which he determined to root out from France, well knowing it to be the foundation of all morality and social order. Danton and Robespierre organized a party to crush him. Hebert perceived indications of this movement and began to tremble. He complained in the Jacobin Club that Robespierre and Danton were plotting against him. Robespierre, who happened to be present on that occasion, immediately ascended the tribune, and hurled his anathemas upon the heads of Hebert and his fanatical followers.

"There are men," said he, "who, under the pretext of destroying superstition, would fain make a religion of Atheism itself. Atheism is aristocratic. The idea of a great Being, who watches over oppressed innocence, and punishes triumphant guilt is quite popular. The people, the unfortunate, applaud me. IF *God did not exist, it would behoove man to invent him.*"

This declaration was received with the greatest applause. The fate of the Hebertists was sealed. They were impeached by St. Just in the National Convention, on the 13th of March, 1794, arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal, on the 20th, and, after a trial of three days, were condemned to death. They were executed, to the number of nineteen persons, on the 24th of March, all but two of them betraying the most abject weakness and terror in their last moments.

There now remained between Robespierre, and the possession of the absolute despotism at which he aimed, only the party headed by Danton.

Prior to the execution of the Hebertists, the two tyrants had been on terms of the most cordial friendship. They had supported one another in all their political designs, and Danton had recently lent his powerful aid to his friend in defeating the Hebertists. But he had now become thoroughly disgusted with the enormities of the Revolution, and earnestly desired to return to a more lenient and tranquil system of government.

In consequence of this change, he became an object of mortal suspicion and enmity to Robespierre. He was repeatedly warned of his danger, but disdained to fly, replying that his enemies dared not arrest him, as his name was still universally feared. Nevertheless, on the 1st of April, 1794, barely a week after the death of Hebert, the citizens of Paris were dumbfounded by the news that the redoubtable Danton had been seized in his bed the night before, and, with his associates, was a prisoner in the Luxembourg.

The Convention, mute with consternation, offered not a shadow of opposition to the arraignment of Danton and his friends. To the number of fifteen, they were brought to trial upon various incoherent and improbable charges. Danton defended himself with lion-like vigor and audacity, and, such was the sympathy aroused by his eloquence, that Robespierre and his enslaved Revolutionary Tribunal were for some time in trepidation as to the result. The despot finally

triumphed by obtaining from the Convention an order enjoining the judges to put out of court any prisoners who might fail in respect to the Tribunal. This was instantly acted upon; Danton and his friends were dragged away from the bar, ere they had finished their defense; and, on the 6th of April, all perished upon the guillotine.

Having thus trampled down all opposition, Robespierre reigned the undisputed despot of France. He still continued to reside in humble lodgings, and to persevere in his plans for establishing the Republic upon a basis of universal brotherhood and equality. Nevertheless, no relaxation took place in the accursed system of terror. On the contrary, the guillotine was never so active as during the brief period of his supremacy. The French historian, Thiers, computes that, in the month of April, 1794, two hundred and sixty-three persons perished upon the guillotine. During the months that followed, the executions increased with frightful rapidity. In May, three hundred and twenty-four were beheaded; in June, six hundred and seventy-two; in July, eight hundred and thirty-five.

Robespierre, St. Just and Couthon were the three leading men in the Committee of Public Safety, and were hence called the Triumvirate. Any man, woman, or child who fell under their suspicion, as being unfriendly to the Revolution,was immediately accused, arrested and thrown into prison. The eighteen prisons of Paris were thus choked with victims. To be suspected meant almost certain death. It seemed as if the tyrant realized that the continuance of his power de-

pended on his persevering energy in the same detestable measures by which he had obtained it.

At this crisis, Robespierre suddenly absented himself from the Convention and the Committees of Public Safety and of General Security. He now passed whole days together, wandering about the fields in profound meditation. It was evident that he was planning some master stroke to rid the Convention and Committees of his remaining enemies. Nevertheless, no one dared to oppose any of his measures, on account of the terror he inspired. Occasionally he made his appearance in the Club of Jacobins—where he exercised unlimited authority—to mount the tribune and address his fellow-members in impassioned tones of complaint; otherwise he kept wholly to himself, brooding and silent, like one who lives in apprehension of approaching death.

At the time of M. Vauban's arrest, he was the idol of the Jacobins; controlled the National Convention through fear; was the supreme arbiter in the Committee of Public Safety and the Revolutionary Tribunal; had the unqualified support of the National Municipal guards and gendarmes; and was regarded by the mob of Paris as the ideal republican of the nation.

Yet, it was against such an all-powerful tyrant that Jean Louvet, an obscure and outlawed Representative, had pitted his puny strength.

CHAPTER VIII.

JEAN LOUVET OPENS THE GAME.

It was midnight in the Maison Rousseau. A light burned in Dr. Narbonne's office, sending its cheering rays athwart the gloomy street; the rest of the house was darkened.

Belated pedestrians noticed that the shutters of every window except one were tightly closed; but, believing that this had been done to insure quiet and repose for the doctor's patients, attached no significance to the matter.

Nevertheless, behind two of the shutters, in a large room on the third floor, a company of conspirators were in session. At one end of the apartment sat Jean Louvet, behind a table littered with papers. Two candles, placed at opposite ends of the table, threw a dim light upon his resolute face, and a gavel rested between them, the emblem of his authority.

At his right sat Dr. Narbonne, bending over a table of smaller size, recording on the pages of an open book the minutes of the mysterious meeting. Opposite them sat a number of aristocratic looking men and women, whom the inhabitants of St. Antoine supposed to be the doctor's patients; but who were in reality the secret agents of a political party then in exile.

After the usual routine business of such meetings had been transacted, Jean Louvet arose from his chair, and addressed the conspirators as follows:

"You have all doubtless heard of my attack on Robespierre this morning on the floor of the National Convention, and have, perhaps, censured it as an act of folly. Let me say a few words in explanation. To begin, you must remember that I procured my election as a Representative with the sole object of striking a decisive blow for our party whenever the opportunity should arrive. I believed that the conditions were favorable for a *coup d'etat* this morning, and I think that they are so yet. Consequently, I trust you will support me in the design I have in view."

He paused, as if half expecting some sign, or word of protest; but, observing that his auditors were all eagerness and attention, went on:

"If the tyrant is ever to be overthrown," he cried, "it must be done now while the majority of Representatives are his secret enemies. We must act promptly and with courage, if we would hope to succeed. Indeed, the least delay will prove fatal to our chances; for it is rumored that Robespierre intends shortly to send all his foes to the guillotine. With his opponents out of the way, he will become the absolute dictator of France, and all hope of ever accomplishing his downfall will be ended."

Waiting until the expressions of dismay produced by these words had subsided, Jean Louvet resumed, with a smile of satisfaction:

"I perceive you all realize that I speak the truth. Now listen to me further. I have been meditating a plot for Robespierre's ruin; but I cannot put it into execution without your aid. You must not ask me to explain its nature; for it must remain my own secret for the present. I shall expect no questioning, but implicit obedience to my commands. Remember that you have elected me your chief, and have sworn to be faithful to me unto death. Can I count on you to abide by your oaths?"

"You can," cried the conspirators in chorus.

"Very well, then," said Louvet, as he resumed his seat at the table, "I will begin my game of politics at once."

He stopped a moment to examine a paper on the table, and then called out:

"Let the brother who is known as André the Barber approach."

A slightly built man, attired in the height of the prevailing fashion, rose from his chair and came forward.

"Does Robespierre still call upon you to shave him?" asked Louvet.

"Yes," replied the young man, with a scornful smile; adding, "He is in deadly fear of assassination and would trust no other man to place a razor near his throat."

"In that case," said Louvet, "you must be in his confidence, and doubtless learn many of his designs."

"As regards his confidence," answered André, with a self-satisfied smirk, "I have already told you that the

tyrant trusts me more than any other person in the kingdom——"

Louvet interrupted him with a quick gesture.

"In the Republic you should say," he interposed, significantly; adding, "You should remember, sir, that there is no kingdom in France at present.'

Apologizing humbly for his error, André the Barber assumed an air of mystery, and, bending over the table toward his chief, whispered impressively:

"You asked me if I had learned any of Robespierre's designs. He is not the kind of man to disclose them. Nevertheless, I am all eyes and ears when in his presence."

"Then you have something of importance to tell me?"

The young man dropped his voice to a still lower whisper, and replied, very gravely:

"I have seen a list of those whom the tyrant intends to destroy. While I was curling his hair yesterday, he drew it from his pocket, and began examining it under my very eyes."

Jean Louvet started back amazed.

"You astound me!" he cried. "What you tell me seems incredible!"

André shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"If you do not believe what I tell you, why question me?" he asked.

"It is not that I doubt your word," returned his chief; "but I am surprised at Robespierre's lack of caution. He is the most suspicious and secretive of men."

"Nevertheless, I saw the list I have mentioned."*

"But how do you know that the paper was what you describe it?"

"I will tell you," answered André. "Supposing at first that the names on the slip were those of persons whom he wished to honor, I asked Robespierre if mine was among them."

"And he answered?"

"That I should rejoice in its omission, as the names on the list were those of persons who had come under his suspicion."

"Which means, of course," added Louvet, grimly, "that they are those of enemies whom he intends sending to the guillotine."

"Exactly," returned André; "for everyone knows that to be suspected by Robespierre is equivalent to being condemned."

"Did you see any of the names?"

"No; for he was very careful I should not. The moment I referred to the paper, he returned it to his pocket, and immediately changed the conversation to other subjects."

Jean Louvet motioned the young man to return to his seat, and fell to pondering. Minute after minute passed by; yet he never once changed his attitude of

* Carlyle and several other historians assert that Robespierre's barber was the first to see the list of the proscribed, which the tyrant is said to have prepared, in anticipation of another attack upon his enemies in the National Convention. He seems to have reposed great confidence in his barber.

profound mental absorption. His eyes were fixed steadfastly upon the paper before him, his chin rested between his palms, and his elbows upon the table. At intervals he knit his brows as if endeavoring to solve some puzzling proposition. Thus half an hour elapsed, during which the conspirators remained motionless and silent, regarding him with the keenest anxiety.

"Is the chief confronted with some inextricable problem?" they asked themselves.

A problem, yes! But not an inextricable one. At the beginning of the conference with his associates, Jean Louvet had a well defined scheme to propose to them; but the information imparted to him by André the Barber had caused him to make a complete change in this plan. With Robespierre's list of the proscribed, he now proposed to overthrow the tyrant by means of a brilliant *coup d'etat*, and his half hour of concentrated reflection had been devoted to perfecting the details of this plot.

Suddenly he raised his head, and, beckoning André the Barber to again come forward, whispered these words in his ear:

"The list you speak of must be procured at all hazards. It is essential to the success of my design. You will, therefore, employ every means in your power to obtain it, or, failing in that, send word to me immediately."

With this command, he dismissed André with a wave of his hand, and called upon another of the conspirators to come forward.

"I will next question the brother who passes as Simon the Jailer," he cried.

The stockily-built man, who has already figured in these pages, advanced to his chief's table, and assumed an attitude of attention.

"Have you many distinguished prisoners in your charge just now?" began Louvet.

"Yes, sir," answered the other, promptly; "the Luxembourg is filled with celebrities."

"Can you name any one who has friends in the Convention?"

Simon the Jailer reflected a moment, and then answered:

"I know of one who has a very powerful friend in that body—Madame Fontenai, with whom Representative Tallien is said to be in love."

"Was she arrested as a suspect? Is she in danger of the guillotine?"

"She was imprisoned by Robespierre's order, and expects daily to go to her death."

"Capital!" ejaculated Louvet, with a pleased smile. "Nothing could be more fortunate for my purposes. Do you see this lady often?"

"Whenever I feel so disposed."

"Then listen to these directions carefully: When you return to the Luxembourg in the morning, seek out this Madame Fontenai, and persuade her to write a pleading letter to her lover. Impress upon her the necessity of playing upon his selfishness. She must write to M. Tallien that she has information that his own head is in danger; that Robespierre is plotting to de-

stroy him and all his friends. M. Tallien loves and trusts the woman implicitly, and will place absolute reliance on her word. Convince Madame Fontenai, therefore, that, unless she arouses him to action, she is hopelessly lost. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly; but how is her letter to reach Tallien's hand?"

"You must offer to act as their go-between, and deliver it to M. Tallien yourself. Can I rely upon you to do this?"

"I will not fail you."

Jean Louvet dismissed Simon the Jailer with a gracious nod, and then commanded François the Idler to appear before him.

"Well," he said, when the latter had taken his position at the table, "what is the present temper of the people?"

"They still adore Robespierre, but are beginning to murmur at so much bloodshed."

"Naturally," said Louvet with a sad smile. "They would be worse than fiends if they did not." He paused a moment to meditate and added, "Do you think they would support Robespierre against the National Convention?"

"That depends upon the issue," answered François, dryly.

"What do you mean?"

"That they would support the side that stood out for equality and freedom. Just now they believe that Robespierre is their best friend. They regard him as

an incorruptible patriot, and not as the despot that he is."

"But if the Convention should denounce him as a tyrant?"

"It would be a hazardous chance; but it might succeed, if supported by proofs."

"Then we must see to it that the proofs are forthcoming," returned Louvet.

And, bidding François return to his seat, he bent over the table, and set about writing a letter.

For a quarter of an hour not a sound broke the silence of the room, save the rapid scratching of his pen over the paper. Then, having finished the missive, he folded, sealed and addressed it, and motioned François to again approach him.

"You will deliver this message to Representative Barrere the first thing in the morning," he said, as he delivered it into the young man's keeping.

"To Barrere, did you say?" asked François in surprise. "Why, he is Robespierre's most intimate friend."

"But an older and truer friend to your chief," returned Louvet, regarding him with a peculiar smile. "Can I trust you to deliver the letter to M. Barrere in person?" he added.

"You can."

"And return to me immediately with the answer?"

"You can trust me."

"Very well then, you may resume your seat."

After questioning and giving directions to several

others in the company, Jean Louvet announced that the conference was at an end.

As André the Barber, Simon the Jailer, François the Idler, and their fellow agents passed through the door, he slipped in each of their hands a scrap of paper on which was written:

"I shall expect you to report to me here to-morrow night at the same hour."

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE CONQUERS DISCRETION.

THE secret meeting over, Louvet retired to an apartment in the rear of the mansion, ostensibly to obtain a few hours of repose, but in reality to ponder upon the plot he had just set in motion.

"To accomplish Robespierre's downfall—what a tremendous task!" he muttered, as he paced nervously to and fro. "Yet, since André informed me of that list of the suspected, I am more hopeful of success than before." And he added, with a smile of triumph—"With that list once in my possession, I do not see how my plot can fail."

Suddenly he stopped, the smile disappeared, and an expression of anxiety clouded his brow.

"But can André procure me that paper?" he asked himself. "He is artful, sagacious and daring, I know; but supposing that in this case he should fail me?"

The mere possibility of such a misadventure caused him to tremble and turn pale with apprehension; for, to the successful execution of his newly-formed designs, the possession of Robespierre's list was essential. Indeed, without it, his *coup d'etat* must fail.

"Oh, why did I enter upon this desperate game before securing the document?" he cried. "I have acted

rashly, nay, madly in planning this affair; but is it too late to retract?"

This question he asked himself over and over again, each time with increased anxiety. A hundred wild projects to communicate with his agents, and warn them to remain inactive until they met again, hurried one after another through his mind; but all were impracticable and had to be abandoned. He flung himself down in an armchair, and remained motionless and absorbed for hours. At last he perceived a dull, grey light glimmering through the panes of the windows, and, going to one that overlooked the garden, drew aside the curtains and glanced out.

Above, the sky was glowing with the rosy light of dawn; below, a dreamy mist enveloped everything. Yet from beneath the mysterious curtain that hid the garden from his view, arose the joyous caroling of birds, and the intoxicating incense of the honeysuckle, rose and bindweed. Entranced by such delicious warblings and odors, Jean Louvet forgot his fears, and allowed the pleasing reveries they suggested to possess him. Gradually, all thoughts of the plot in which he was engaged passed out of his consciousness, and in their place arose bright visions of happiness and love.

Love.

In Jean Louvet's mind the idea suggested by this word was invariably associated with the image of Louise Vauban. It is true that he had spoken to her but once in his life; nevertheless she had hallowed his dreams and reveries for many months. He had first

met her at a state reception, given by the Mayor of Paris, and, on beholding her marvelous beauty and distinguished bearing, experienced an agitation of the heart which it was impossible for him to define.

Now Louvet possessed one of those rarely constituted natures, which combine the prompt resolution of the man of action, with the sensitive intuition of the poet.

His soul was overflowing with enthusiasms, aspirations, rhapsodies. The great heart of Nature throbbed in unison with his own. She revealed to him secrets, which she jealously guarded from her less-favored sons, and, on his first meeting with Louise, unveiled the greatest of all her secrets—the divine mystery of human love.

Louise was standing on the threshold of the ball-room, illuminated by the mellow light of a thousand candles. She was leaning gracefully against one of the lintels, a pose that showed to advantage the exquisite curves of her figure. She was attired in a close fitting bodice of pale silk, and a clinging gown of the same material, that suggested an entrancing shapeliness of limb. Her bodice, cut away at the neck, revealed the gentle swelling of her bosom, yet only half revealed, for the open space was filled in with a filmy cloud of snow white lace.

These charms Louvet beheld from a distance; but, when he drew near the door, and ventured a glance at her lovely face, dimpling and glowing with smiles and blushes, she returned his look with a soft beam of her lustrous eyes, and he was love-smitten on the instant.

For that brief look had kindled a consuming fire in

his soul, and the agitation, which had been hitherto indefinable, he now recognized as the first emotions of divine passion.

Many times since that meeting he had seen Louise Vauban at a distance, generally in the company of her father. He had met her at fêtes, balls and receptions—where he might easily have been presented to her—yet, such was the adoring reverence in which he held the lovely girl, that he had not presumed to obtrude himself upon her notice, until she stood in sore need of a brave man's assistance. He had then offered his services to her, and they had been accepted. With sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks he now recalled her fervent exclamation—"I trust you, M. Louvet, and gratefully accept your brave offer!" But had he not neglected to provide for her safety while plotting the rescue of her father?

This query suggested many terrible possibilities to his excited mind.

Supposing that Louise Vauban should attempt to effect the release of her father on her own account? Or that she should become involved in a plot on his behalf, and so incur the displeasure of Robespierre? In either event she would be arrested as a suspect, and eventually end her fair young life upon the guillotine.

"I must hasten to her without the least delay," he reflected, with terror in his heart. "I must risk everything to warn her to remain quiet."

He was about to start out upon this mission, when the indiscretion of the act made him hesitate.

"No," he muttered, resolutely, "I cannot venture out

of my hiding place just now. It would be mere madness to do so; for the fate of every person involved in this conspiracy depends upon my remaining free to direct them. If I should fall into the hands of our enemies at this time all would be lost."

Here he raised his eyes to heaven and prayed earnestly.

"Into Thy hands, O God, I deliver my beloved! Guard her from all peril! Inspire her with patience and prudence! Keep her in Thy safe keeping until I have accomplished my purpose!"

Nevertheless, his solicitude regarding Louise was too great to admit of his acting with discretion; for, assuming a disguise, he crept noiselessly out of the room, stole quickly down the stairs, and proceeded to the secret door opening into the garden. It took him but a few moments to withdraw the bolts, turn the key in its rusty lock, and throw the door wide open.

Then, closing it softly behind him, he sallied forth on his errand of love.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT BEFELL ANDRÉ THE BARBER.

At a later hour on the same morning, André the Barber knocked on the door of the cabinetmaker's house, in the Rue Saint Honoré, with the tools of his profession in his hand. He had come to shave the incorruptible visage and frizzle the immaculate locks of the great Robespierre.

Upon being admitted, he greeted the servant with a merry jest, and, without further ceremony, ran nimbly up the stairs to his patron's lodgings; from which it may be inferred that he was a privileged personage, as, apart from his brother, Augustin, and the honest citizen with whom he lived, Robespierre permitted to no one else such freedom.

Indeed there existed between the tyrant and his barber a peculiar relationship of confidence and familiarity, which was the logical result of those anarchistic times.

André found his patron in a mood of profound depression, and, with the art of an accomplished courtier, endeavored to raise the clouds of gloom from his spirits by gay and witty conversation. In this he succeeded so well that, before his task was half finished, the tyrant began to respond.

"Do you know, André," said he, as the latter was scraping his throat with a keen-edged razor, "that you are the most trusted man in France?"

"Indeed?"

"Undoubtedly," went on Robespierre; "for I would permit no one else to do what you are doing now."

"I do not understand you," said André, artfully.

"Then you are far more stupid than I supposed. Why, can't you realize, my honest fellow, that with one sweep of your razor you could end my existence, and with it the future hopes of the Republic?"

André uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Oh, Citizen Robespierre, what a terrible thought!"

"It is terrible indeed," returned the tyrant with a shudder. "Not that I value my own life; but my assassination would mean the end of liberty, equality and fraternity in France. There are many traitors in the National Convention who are trying to bring this very thing about, and I alone can defeat them."

André lengthened his face and sighed hypocritically.

"Ah, if all our public men were like you!" he said; and a moment afterward he added, "but console yourself, my generous patron! You are not the only great man who has been vexed by the machinations of wicked enemies. History is filled with such examples."

Robespierre received the compliment, as if it were well merited, and replied with a sad shake of the head:

"Yes, I know what others have suffered for the love of humanity and country; nevertheless, history can

scarcely show a single case that quite parallels my own."

"In magnanimity, virtue and incorruptible honesty—No!" exclaimed André with well-feigned enthusiasm.

"You flatter me, my good fellow," responded Robespierre with a pleased smile. "I was not alluding to my virtues, but to my sufferings. What I intended to say was that no reformer in history has met with such base ingratitude from his associates."

"But the people love you," protested André.

"As they loved Danton, yes; but I am not so blind to the fickleness of their affections as he was. They love me now, because they believe me to be their all-powerful friend and protector; but it is quite probable that my enemies can seduce them to abandon me."

"Impossible! There lives not a man in France who would dare the attempt!" cried André.

Robespierre's thin lips parted in a sardonic smile.

"You think so?" he inquired bitterly. "Then it is apparent that you hear but little of the news. Why, it was only yesterday that an unimportant Representative, named Jean Louvet, had the audacity to address the National Convention and call for my accusation and arrest."

"The infamous wretch!" exclaimed the patriotic barber.

"Nor is that all," resumed the tyrant, his voice becoming sterner and more threatening as he proceeded. "This obscure Representative, having failed to carry his point, was permitted to leave the Convention Hall unmolested. Indeed, it was not until he had made his

escape that the Convention accused him of treason, and declared him an outlaw, with a price set upon his head."

"Then by this time he must have been arrested."

"On the contrary he is still at large, owing, as I have been informed, to the interference of two of his friends."

"The miscreants!" muttered André.

"You may well call them that," said Robespierre grimly; adding, "but I know who they are, and will soon have them lodged safely in prison."

Then he related all the particulars of Jean Louvet's capture by the mob of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and of his rescue by the timely arrival of his associates.

"And were the rascals who came to his assistance Representatives also?" asked André, leading him on by feigning complete ignorance of the affair.

"No," replied Robespierre, falling into the trap at once; "they were supposedly honest republicans like yourself. One of them is a loiterer who is called François the Idler; the other is employed in the Luxembourg as a turnkey, and is known as Simon the Jailer."

André's face turned suddenly pale, and his hand trembled violently. It was fortunate that the tyrant's eyes were engaged elsewhere at that moment; otherwise these evidences of emotion might have betrayed him.

For the young man had just listened to an alarming revelation. It did not astonish him to hear the tyrant refer to his Chief's defiant conduct in the National

Convention, nor did it surprise him to learn that his patron had received intelligence of his subsequent capture by, and escape from the mob. But that Robespierre actually knew the names of the men who had saved Jean Louvet's life was enough to fill his heart with consternation.

"Oh, if I could only warn them of their peril!" he reflected with the keenest anxiety. "But I fear it is too late. By this time Simon must have returned to his duties in the Luxembourg, while François is probably airing his opinions in the cafés and clubs he frequents."

These thoughts were interrupted by a remark from Robespierre.

"Do you know, my good fellow, that you have positively excelled yourself this morning?"

André turned quickly toward him, and observed that he was surveying his person in the mirror with the utmost complacency. He had changed his coat and waistcoat for similar garments of a brighter hue, and more elaborate design, and seemed greatly pleased at his appearance.

"Yes," he resumed, as he patted the hair about his temples, "you have really lent dignity to my features by your skill in hairdressing. Therefore I congratulate you before bidding you good-day; for I must now be off to visit a person from whom I expect to gain valuable information."

Saying which, he smiled approvingly upon his faithful barber, and strutted vainly out of the room.

"Miserable egotist!" muttered André, when the last

sounds of his retreating footsteps had died away. "You doubtless believe that you are the greatest of living men; yet you have just revealed to an humble barber,"—and here he laughed significantly—"the pitiable weakness of vanity in dress."

While these words were trembling upon his lips, his eyes were wandering here and there about the room, taking note of every article of furniture it contained.

In an alcove opposite stood the tyrant's bed—a plain affair of uncarved mahogany, with four straight posts at the corners, supporting a canopy of coarse netting. Between the two windows, which fronted the Rue Saint Honoré, appeared a narrow cabinet-desk, equipped with numerous little drawers and pigeon-holes containing papers. A few wooden chairs; a centre-table, covered with books, pamphlets and the journals of the day; and a large mahogany wardrobe, with a highly polished mirror inserted in the panel of its great door, completed the chamber's appointments.

"Where shall I begin?" thought André, as he glanced irresolutely from one object to another. "In what place has Robespierre secreted his list of doomed victims? The Chief has commanded me to procure it at all hazards, and I must not, nay will not, fail him."

It may appear improbable to the reader, that a man as shrewd and suspicious as Robespierre should have left his apartments in the complete possession of his barber. A few words will be sufficient to explain this apparent inconsistency:

It has already been stated that the tyrant reposed unlimited trust in André, not only because he continually placed his life at the latter's mercy, but because André had acquired a subtle influence over his melancholy disposition. Moreover, like all despots, Robespierre had certain favorites to whom he allowed privileges of an extraordinary nature.

André the Barber was one of these.

"Where shall I begin?" he asked himself again.

It did not take him long to decide. Arguing that Robespierre had probably placed the list in one of the pigeon-holes, or drawers of his cabinet-desk, he tiptoed softly across the room, and began his search.

First he made a thorough examination of the pigeonholes.

They contained a few bundles of letters, carefully arranged according to date, and tied neatly with strips of tape. A cursory glance at their contents informed him that they were of no particular importance.

He next applied himself to forcing open the little drawers.

Producing a knife from his pocket, he opened its narrowest blade, inserted it between the frame and front of the largest box, and began to pry forward.

To his surprise he found it unlocked.

He pulled it from its frame, and searched eagerly among its contents for the list.

It was not there.

Finding that all the other drawers were also unlocked, he submitted them, in quick succession, to the same scrutiny; and, as his perilous task progressed,

he became more and more conscious of the risk he was incurring, so that the papers shook and rustled in his trembling hands.

Having finished his examination of the desk without result, he next began rummaging the books and pamphlets on the centre-table, thinking it possible that the object of his search might have been placed for safe-keeping between their covers. But here also he was disappointed.

At last his gaze rested upon the wardrobe.

At the same instant a gleam of triumph flashed from his eyes, and he muttered confidently:

"What an idiot I am! If the list is anywhere, it must certainly be in the pocket of the coat from which Robespierre produced it when I last shaved him."

Acting upon this theory, André crept noiselessly toward the wardrobe, and slowly opened the door. But, alarmed at the creaking of its hinges, he paused several times in the act. Great beads of perspiration exuded from his forehead, and his heart beat violently, as he prepared to ransack the pockets of the terrible despot.

There were coats and waistcoats innumerable, and of every conceivable design, hanging in closely packed masses from the crowded rows of hooks. Confronted with such a multitude of garments, André was greatly bewildered; nevertheless, he persevered assiduously, until he at last found the coat he was in search of.

With a smile of satisfaction he plunged his hands into its pockets.

They were all empty.

For a moment he was overcome with chagrin; then, setting his teeth resolutely together, he applied himself to the formidable task of rifling every pocket in the wardrobe. The excitement, that grew upon him as he proceeded, gradually dissipated his fears, and all his faculties became concentrated upon one absorbing object—the securing of Robespierre's list of the condemned.

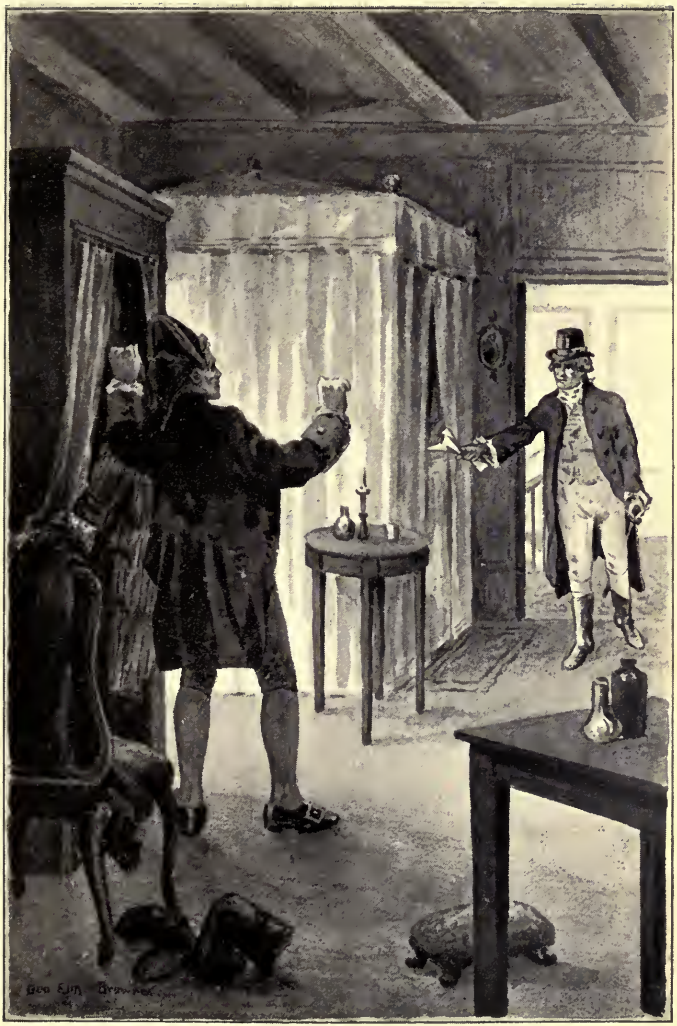
He went through pocket after pocket, with the swiftness and stealth of a practiced thief, muttering incoherently, and vacillating between the extremes of hope and despair.

He had been engaged in this fruitless quest for over an hour, when he heard the door of the apartment open, and drew back quickly with a guilty, startled look upon his face. This expression passed away in an instant, however; for, when he turned toward the door, his countenance was wreathed in a smile of the most child-like innocence, and his gaze was simplicity itself.

Nor did that simple, honest gaze waver for a second when it encountered the crafty, murderous eyes of Robespierre.

The tyrant was standing within the threshold, suspicious, yellow, threatening. His thin lips were pressed tightly together, excepting at their corners, where they curled up cruelly, displaying two pointed teeth. A heavy menacing cloud hung over his brows; while his slender frame fairly shook with mistrust, fear and rage.

Suddenly he thrust a hand into his coat pocket, drew forth a neatly folded paper, shook it in the very face



"WERE YOU SEARCHING MY POCKETS FOR THIS, VILE TRAITOR?"—*Page* 101.

of the smiling barber, and cried out in harsh foreboding tones:

"Were you searching my pockets for this, vile traitor?"

André remained motionless and silent; for he recognized the fatal list for which he had risked so much.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW IT FARED WITH SIMON THE JAILER.

WHILE André the Barber was on his way to Robespierre's lodgings, Simon the Jailer was returning to his duties in the Luxembourg. As he was proceeding thither, he shook his head doubtfully and muttered at frequent intervals:

"I wonder what game the Chief is up to now. I wish he would explain matters more clearly, instead of keeping his designs a secret. I'm no lover of mysteries myself, and dislike acting in the dark; but Jean Louvet loves secrecy above all things."

Here he frowned gloomily and sighed.

"Well," he resumed, after a short period devoted to silent meditation, "I've sworn to obey the Chief blindly, and will keep my oath, no matter what befalls. Yes, I'll do my best to see this Madame Fontenai, and persuade her to write that letter to M. Tallien."

While thus discoursing with himself, he came within view of the Luxembourg, and quickened his footsteps in order to report for duty on time. At last he arrived at his destination, and, having apprised the chief jailer of his return, passed into the interior to resume his functions.

Now, although the famous Luxembourg Prison had

formerly been the magnificent palace of *"Monsieur,"* the revolutionists had converted it into a huge, loathsome dungeon. Outwardly it still appeared an object beautiful to behold; but within were filth, disease and misery. In spite of its great dimensions, it was so crowded with prisoners that it was impossible to provide decent accommodations for half their number. Every apartment from cellar to attic (the great halls, galleries, corridors, salons) was packed with victims for the guillotine; and, moreover, many of these unfortunates had been participants in the building's former pleasures, when its walls resounded to the strains of enlivening music, and the joyous laughter of *"Monsieur's"* guests.

Alas, what a terrible change!

This desecrated palace was now the abode of every kind of suffering. The despair which reigned in the breasts of its inmates was awful. One finished his existence by poison; another opened his veins with a nail; a third dashed his brains out against the walls of his cell; while many lost their reason.

Those who possessed sufficient fortitude waited patiently for the summons of the executioner. The legal process which consigned them to death was simple and energetic in the extreme. Any person suspected of being unfriendly to the Revolution was accused by the Committee of Public Safety, and ordered to be immediately arrested and imprisoned. The eighteen prisons of Paris were thus choked with "suspects," awaiting trial before the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal. This infamous court was a mockery of justice.

To be brought before it meant one step further on the road to death; nothing more. The Public Accuser, the sanguinary Fouquier-Tinville, boasted that he seldom allowed a "suspect" to escape him.

Having been condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal, the prisoners were herded into tumbrils, and hurried away to the frightful Conciergerie Prison.

One night of horror in this death house; to the guillotine to-morrow.

Yet, despite the grim shadow of this hideous scaffold, which hovered continuously over them, the prisoners formed habits of existing together that were not without social observances, politenesses and joys. Dukes and Duchesses, aristocrats and plebeians, flung promiscuously together in these loathsome places, returned to the old system of distinction in classes, and ranked themselves according to time-honored precedent.

The aristocrats sat down to their lean dinner of herbs and carrion, not without etiquette and *place-aux-dames;* and, while inwardly shuddering at the loathsome food provided, enlivened the meal with repartee and laughter. "Jealousies, enmities are not wanting, nor flirtations of an effective character."*

"Recklessness, defiant levity, the Stoicism, if not of strength, yet of weakness, has possessed all hearts. Weak Women and *Ci-devants*, their locks not yet made into blond perukes, their skins not yet tanned into breeches, are accustomed to act the Guillotine by way of pastime. In fantastic mummery, with towel-turbans, blanket-ermine, a mock Sanhedrim of Judges

* Carlyle's French Revolution, Vol. III.

sits, a mock Tinville pleads; a culprit is doomed, is guillotined by the oversetting of two chairs. Sometimes we carry it further: Tinville himself, in his turn, is doomed, and not to the guillotine alone. With blackened face, hirsute, horned, a shaggy Satan snatches him not unshrieking; shows him, with outstretched arms and voice, the fire that is not quenched, the worm that dies not; the monotony of Hell-pain and the *What-Hour?*—answered by—*It is Eternity!*"

Through this desecrated palace of fears and heroisms, Simon the Jailer proceeded, until he came to a little courtyard where a number of prisoners were amusing themselves. Casting his eyes from group to group, he presently observed Madame Fontenai, sitting gracefully upon a wooden stool that a chivalrous, old gallant had surrendered to her. She was plying her needle rapidly, while conversing with several admirers, who were standing round her lowly seat, like courtiers round the throne of a queen. At intervals she raised her beautiful eyes, and laughed gaily at some sally of wit; whereupon the gentlemen nodded their approval, and re-echoed her merriment in chorus.

"How beautiful she is!" reflected the admiring Simon. "And what a heroic spirit she displays amidst all these horrors!"

Indeed, the gay and volatile Fontenai, who afterward, as Madame Tallien, was regarded as one of the most beautiful and charming women in all France, was now in the flower of her youth, and was already an adept in those countless, winning graces which rarely fail to fascinate and enslave the hearts of men.

Drawing nearer to the light-hearted group, Simon the Jailer awaited a favorable opportunity to engage her in conversation. The chance presented itself sooner than he anticipated. For presently she laid aside her needle-work, arose from her seat, and dismissed her admirers with a graceful curtsy; after which she turned from them, with a gracious smile, and proceeded toward the opposite end of the courtyard.

As it was apparent that she was about to retire to her cell to enjoy a few hours of repose, Simon realized that he must act at once, or run the doubtful chance of executing his mission at another time. So, hastening after the lady, he succeeded in reaching her side, just as she was in the act of passing into the corridor communicating with her chamber.

"Pardon me, Madame Fontenai!" he began, in an earnest undertone; "but I have something to tell you that concerns your future fate."

The lady paused, and, turning toward him with the utmost dignity,

"What do you mean, sir?" she demanded haughtily.

"Simply this, my dear madame," he whispered eagerly: "I am a friend who would save you from death, if you will permit me."

"Save me?"

"Aye, and a dear friend of yours as well. You have merely to do as I say to insure this result."

"But how can I tell that you speak the truth, sir? You are my jailer, whom it would be mere folly to trust."

Simon the Jailer inclined his head to the lady with the easy grace of a born aristocrat, saying:

"Yet I can prove my honesty if you will allow me."

Madame, who was not devoid of penetration, smiled at this and answered:

"I will grant the opportunity you desire, if you can arrange it."

At this Simon led the way into the corridor; motioned her to accompany him to a place where they could not be observed; and, when they had reached it, turned suddenly toward her with the question:

"Do you really believe me to be a common jailer?"

Madame Fontenai laughed lightly.

"Why really, sir, I have never given the subject much thought," she said; "but, since you have asked me the question, I will answer—No!"

"Thank you!" he returned fervently.

Then, knowing that their interview might be interrupted at any moment, he proceeded to explain to her the awful peril of her position, and the fate that awaited her friends also in the world outside.

"Alas, sir!" cried poor Fontenai, when he had finished. "I am aware that every word you have uttered is undeniably true. That my death is near, I realize only too well, and I tremble when I think of dear Tallien and his associates. But what can I do, sir?" she added, distractedly. "For God's sake, advise me how to act!"

"Will you promise to obey me if I advise you?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she sobbed in terror. "Only save

me; save my friends! and I will do anything you ask."

Simon the Jailer remained silent for a moment to collect his thoughts, and then gave the following instructions to the despairing lady:

"There is but one way to save yourself, madame, and, for that matter, to save your friends also. It is this: Representative Tallien has still some power in the Convention. He is brilliant, energetic and daring; but at present he fancies himself safe. He and his supporters seem to have been lulled into a fatal sleep; for they are deaf to all words of ill-omen."

Madame Fontenai was greatly affected by this speech.

"Oh, can no one arouse him from his lethargy?" she moaned.

"Yes, my dear madame," was Simon's grave response. "M. Tallien can be awakened by you."

Madame gave a little gasp.

"Listen!" he continued, in impressive, solemn tones. "You must be aware that Tallien loves you dearly. Therefore retire to your cell at once and write him an appealing letter, warning him of the imminent peril of his position. Conjure him to save you, aye, and to save himself as well, by inciting the National Convention against Robespierre. Tell him that he is already doomed, and, unless he acts promptly and with vigor, he and his followers will perish upon the guillotine."

The lady drank in eagerly every word he uttered, and, when he paused,

"But who will deliver my letter to M. Tallien?" she asked anxiously.

"I will," said Simon gallantly; "so make haste and write it at once, in order that you may give it into my keeping as soon as possible."

Madame Fontenai having retired to execute this order, Simon the Jailer went about the performance of his duties as usual. He experienced a sense of satisfaction in having succeeded so well with the lady; yet he was keenly alive to the difficulties that still confronted him. To obtain the letter was one thing; to deliver it to M. Tallien was another. For this famous man was not one to be easily approached. Moreover, as Simon would be on duty until six o'clock that evening, his time for finding the busy Representative was limited.

"If I do not catch him while he is dining at home," thought he, "my mission is likely to end in failure after all. For the Chief has commanded us to report to him at twelve to-night, and I'll have but a few hours to run M. Tallien to cover."

Perhaps an hour had elapsed, when Madame Fontenai emerged from her cell, and glided into the courtyard where Simon the Jailer was then busy. She did not approach him at first; but gave him a significant glance, which he easily interpreted as a signal that she had written the letter. When a favorable opportunity offered, therefore, he advanced cautiously to her side, and received a carefully sealed missive from her dainty hand.

"That is the letter, *monsieur*," she whispered. "I trust you will deliver it as you promised."

"I will do my very best," he answered.

And, placing the missive stealthily in his pocket, he turned abruptly away, and hurried into the corridor, with the apparent intention of engaging in some important task.

To the credit of Simon be it said, that the prisoners under his charge were better cared for and fed than any others in the Luxembourg. Although he never allowed a chance to escape him of cursing all aristocrats, and indulging in violent utterances on behalf of the Republic, he, nevertheless, treated his high-born charges with secret kindness, keeping their cells as neat and clean as possible under the circumstances, and doing all that lay in his power to ameliorate their sufferings.

He was employed in scrubbing the walls of an old royalist's chamber shortly after parting with Madame Fontenai, when he heard the voice of the chief jailer call out from the end of the corridor:

"Simon! Oh, Simon! Where in the devil's name are you?"

The honest jailer dropped his scrubbing brushes in an instant, and wiped the soap-suds from his hands on a coarse towel.

"I'm here, sir," he answered cheerily, as he hurried out into the corridor; adding as he approached his superior, "and on duty as you may see from my appearance."

Until that moment he was under the impression that the chief jailer was alone; but now he saw that two other men were accompanying him. One glance at their sturdy figures, and the uniforms they wore, informed him that they were members of the Municipal Gendarmes; but, as such officers were frequent visitors to the prison, their appearance did no disturb him.

"They have probably brought another unfortunate to the Luxembourg," he thought, "and wish to learn if I have accommodations for his safe keeping."

But he was soon undeceived.

"Is this the man we are to arrest?" asked one, addressing his superior, as he pointed toward him.

"He is known as Simon the Jailer," replied the official indifferently. "I can tell you nothing further."

"Then he is the fellow we want," said the gendarme, drawing a warrant of arrest issued by the Committee of Public Safety from his pocket, and coolly presenting it to the astonished Simon.

"Unfold it and read!" he commanded.

Simon the Jailer perused the document with bulging eyes, and returned it to the gendarme with a groan of despair; for it accused him of being a friend of the notorious outlaw, Jean Louvet, and of having assisted him in escaping apprehension in the Faubourg St. Antoine.

"Well," said the gendarme, as he returned the document to his pocket, "are you ready to accompany us before the Revolutionary Tribunal?"

"I am," replied Simon, despairingly.

Whereupon the two gendarmes led him forth from the Luxembourg with Madame Fontenai's compromising letter upon his person.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ADVENTURES OF FRANCOIS THE IDLER.

THE sun had mounted high in the heavens, before François the Idler, swinging a cane in his hand, started to deliver the letter which Jean Louvet had written to Representative Barrere.

After visiting the Convention Hall, and learning that the rich republican had not left his country house that day to attend the meeting of Representatives, he turned away and sauntered slowly toward Barrere's villa, which stood in the midst of a beautiful estate at Clichy, a suburb of Paris. As the day was warm, and the distance long, however, he performed the journey leisurely, stopping for rest and refreshment at every public house along the way. In fact he had acquired such lounging, dilatory habits in his character of Idler, that he could hardly be blamed for his shortcomings in this respect.

Nor could he be held accountable for that inborn love of nature, which prompted him to pause, at frequent intervals, to admire the lovely bits of landscape, that appeared at every turn in the road after he had left Paris, and to make many excursions into the bordering meadows to gather nosegays of bright-hued flowers.

For François was a true Frenchman, ever ready to respond to the allurements of gayety and beauty.

It was not until afternoon, therefore, that he reached Barrere's villa, which occupied an artificial plateau rising above a fairy-like region of velvety lawns, trees, graveled walks and flower beds.

As he passed through the gate, and beheld all the beauties of the place, he could not keep from smiling at the display of so much luxuriance in a republican.

"'Tis fortunate you are a friend of Robespierre, my good Barrere," he murmured good-naturedly, "or this extravagant home of yours might cost you your head."

While thinking in this wise he arrived at the entrance of the splendid house, and announced to the servant in attendance that he was the bearer of a message to Representative Barrere.

"But my master is ill," protested the lackey, "and cannot be disturbed."

"Indeed?" cried François, elevating his eyebrows doubtfully.

"I have said it," growled the lackey very sullenly, "and I care not whether you believe it, or not."

At this François assumed an air of authority, and declared, that, even if his master were dying, he must see him without further delay.

"Stand aside, you rascal!" he exclaimed angrily, "or I will give you a taste of this cane."

And, accompanying the words with a wave of his gold-headed walking stick, he pushed resolutely forward into the great hall.

There was something so compelling in his tone and manner that the lackey dropped insolence for apology, and led the way into an ante-room to the right of the great corridor.

"Pray be seated, *monsieur!*" he said humbly, as he pointed to an armchair near a window; adding, "Your name, please! so that I can inform my master who is awaiting him."

This query placed François in an awkward position; for it seemed hardly probable that the proud Barrere would grant a mere idler like himself the desired interview. True, he might have delivered the letter to the lackey, with instructions to hand it to his master; but Jean Louvet had strictly commanded him to deliver it in person.

"The Chief must have had some good reason for issuing such a strict order," he reflected, "and I'll obey him, even if it is necessary to employ force."

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, the lackey stood before him, awaiting an answer to his question. Receiving none, he again ventured to ask:

"Your name, if you please, *monsieur?*"

This persistency on the lackey's part suggested an idea to François which he determined to act upon at once. Realizing that, if he complied with the rules of etiquette, he would be defeated in his purpose, he sprang suddenly to his feet and seized the servant by the arm, shouting angrily:

"My name be damned, you impudent knave! Come, sir, conduct me into your master's presence at once, or I will wring your neck!"

The astonished servant received this tirade with cries for help; whereupon several of his comrades, alarmed by the disturbance, came running toward the ante-room to learn what was the matter. As they rushed, one after another, into the room, François withdrew into a corner, gave a twist to the handle of his walking stick, whipped, from its place of concealment in the wood, a long narrow blade, and assumed an attitude of resolute defense.

The lackies, imagining that the house had been invaded by a lunatic, fell over one another in their haste to retreat through the door, meanwhile giving utterance to such cries of affright that their master came out of the room where he had been resting, and appeared at the head of the stairs, crying:

"In the name of liberty, good citizens! what means this clamor?"

Before any of his servants could reply, François the Idler sauntered out of the ante-room, strode leisurely to the foot of the flight, saluted the Representative with his sword, and said calmly:

"It means, Citizen Barrere, that I have been treated with gross insolence by your servants."

He accompanied these words with such an admirable air of bravado that Barrere did not doubt he spoke the truth. He was about to reprimand his lackies when he fortunately recollected that the man who made this charge was a total stranger. So he temporized the matter by expressing a civil regret, and then suddenly asking François what business had brought him to his house.

"I am the bearer of a message which I am commanded to hand to you in person," answered François, producing the letter which Louvet had given him at the secret conference.

"I dare say it's of no importance," was Barrere's testy response; "so you'll please excuse me for declining to receive it just now."

Seeing that he was about to retire, François resolved to prevent him, and sprang nimbly up the stairs, calling after him:

"Are you mad, Citizen Barrere, to treat a friend's messenger like this? Come, sir, I will deliver my message, if I have to break down your door to get at you."

Thoroughly frightened by these resolute words, and by the naked sword in the stranger's hand, Barrere was on the point of calling his servants to defend him, when a sudden change in the young man's manner, caused him to alter his mind, and to inquire more closely into the nature of his errand.

"From whom do you come, young man?" he asked, as he extended his hand for the letter.

"You will learn that when you have broken this seal."

And, pointing significantly to the wafer with which it was stamped, François surrendered the message.

As Barrere was now thoroughly convinced that it had been sent him by some person of importance, he beckoned François to accompany him to his chamber.

On entering the apartment, François returned his sword into its hiding place, and stretched his languid form upon a sofa. Meanwhile his host drew a chair to

a table, and, after breaking the seal from the message, spread open the sheet of paper and read the following:

"My Dear Barrère:

"As you are the only friend of mine who is on terms of intimacy with Robespierre, I am compelled to call upon you to comply with the request I now make. I want you to give a bachelor dinner in your villa at Clichy three days after receiving this message. Give it in Robespierre's honor, and be sure to invite all the leaders who are opposed to him in the Convention. Robespierre, out of friendship for you, will be sure to attend the gathering, and events of the greatest importance will follow. I might remind you of the obligations you owe me for past benefits, and put this request in the nature of a command; but I prefer to trust to your friendship. You can rely upon me to protect you, no matter how this affair may result. You will oblige me by sending an answer by my messenger.

"JEAN LOUVET."

M. Barrere gasped convulsively while perusing these words, and, when he had finished, arose from the table and began pacing the floor in great agitation.

"Merciful heavens!" he exclaimed, with a vehement gesture. "Does this Louvet wish to ruin me? Is he trying to involve me in a conspiracy?"

François turned his eyes scornfully upon him and observed:

"You can trust my master to do his friends no harm."

Barrere stopped in his tracks and scrutinized the messenger's face closely.

"Who told you that I am this traitor's friend?" he asked.

François shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not here to be questioned," he replied, coolly; "but to receive your answer to my master's letter."

His effrontery aroused Barrere to sudden anger.

"So this Jean Louvet—this condemned outlaw is your master, eh? I thank you, young man, for informing me of the fact!"

While speaking, he backed gradually toward the door leading into the hall, and, before François became aware of his intention, darted suddenly through it, slammed it shut with a bang, and turned the key quickly in the lock.

François bounded to his feet with a roar like that of a wild beast; but ere he could reach the door, he heard the voice of his captor squeak triumphantly through the keyhole:

"Like master, like man! As you've had the audacity to approach me with a message from an outlawed traitor, I presume you are an enemy of the Republic, and will keep you safely in my trap, until I can summon the gendarmes to take you off to prison."

A moment afterward, the captive heard the same voice shouting to his lackies:

"Fetch your muskets, my brave lads, and mount guard over this villainous traitor!"

This command was immediately obeyed, and, before François the Idler had time to realize his situation, two

armed retainers of Barrere's household had taken up their station in the hall outside, while two others were promenading the graveled path that ran beneath the windows of his prison.

CHAPTER XIII.

FACE TO FACE.

SINCE her unsuccessful interview with Robespierre, Louise Vauban had remained in strict seclusion, in the splendid mansion on the Rue Saint Honoré, prostrated with grief at the terrible fate which awaited her beloved father. The household servants, having fled from the dwelling with the instinct which prompts rats to desert an unseaworthy ship, her faithful maid, Marie, was now her sole companion.

To the casual passer-by, the great house appeared to be deserted.

The shutters of the front windows were tightly closed, and the steps, railings and cornices were covered with dust. For the two heart-broken women were anxious above all things to screen their misery from the inquisitive gaze of outsiders.

The interior of the mansion presented a scene of disorder and desolation. Nothing had been removed, or changed, since the night of M. Vauban's arrest.

The floor of the great ballroom was covered with the faded leaves of flowers. Groups of palms and baskets of withered ferns still occupied the various alcoves; while the dense screen of plants, that had formed a curtain round the platform occupied by the orchestra,

drooped disconsolately, and extended a thousand parched leaves on every side in a mute appeal for water.

The reception rooms and salons exhibited a similar woe-begone aspect, and the broad staircase, leading to the banquet-hall above, was littered with ribbons, favors and other vain nick-nacks of pleasure. But it was not until you entered the banquet-hall itself that the blight which had fallen upon the Vauban mansion could be fully realized. The enormous table, which occupied the middle of the apartment, still groaned beneath the weight of costly plate and viands. Slender glasses, half-filled with the choicest wine, stood beside daintily-painted dishes containing the most delicious edibles—speaking eloquently of the sudden consternation which had caused the unfortunate Vauban's guests to flee panic-stricken from their places at his hospitable board. Nor were other evidences of their terror wanting; for, here and there, a chair was overturned, or a dish lay broken on the floor.

It needed but the flaming inscription—*"Mene! Mene! Tekel Upharsin!"*—to flash along the wall, to recall to mind Belshazzar's impious feast, which the appearance of Daniel the Prophet brought to so tragic a close.

On the morning that witnessed the unfortunate exploits of André, Simon and François, Louise was sitting in her bed-chamber, propped up in an armchair, by a window, gazing blankly down upon the garden below, like one stupefied by grief. Marie occupied a stool at her feet, regarding her with affectionate solici-

tude, while bravely endeavoring to inspire her with hope.

"Do not give way so, dear heart!" she said, pleadingly, as she patted the limp hand of her mistress. "You seem to have quite forgotten that gallant young man who promised to befriend your good father."

"It was very kind of him, I'll admit," answered Louise, faintly.

"Kind, did you say? It was more than that; it was brave and noble."

Louise sighed gently, and a momentary flush suffused her countenance.

"Yes," she murmured, "it was certainly generous of him to come to my aid." She relapsed into silence for a few moments, and then resumed, half dreamily, "Why, his conduct was worthy of a knight-errant. It reminds me of the heroes of Chivalry."

"I know nothing about knight-errants and the sort of heroes you speak of," said Marie with great fervor; "but I do know this:—that young stranger is the bravest man in France. I watched him keenly while he was offering to aid you, dear mistress, and I know he meant all that he said. He will help you, you may depend upon it."

The earnestness of her manner had a stimulating effect upon her mistress; for she now bent forward eagerly and asked:

"Then you think there is still hope for my father?"

"I'll tell you all that has been passing in my mind since I first saw and heard the young stranger. But will you promise not to take offense at what I say?"

"I'll promise."

"Then listen!" resumed Marie, gazing steadily into her eyes. "To begin, my sweet mistress, you must surely know that you are very beautiful. Now don't blush, deary; for that is mere coquetry. Every one acknowledges that you are not only beautiful, but gentle, good and charming. In short, you are just the kind of girl to make men love you."

"Love? Did you say love, Marie?" cried Louise, with a bitter laugh. "Why, it is a foolish delusion to lure young girls to their ruin." Then, suddenly changing her tone, she added with tragic scorn, "Have you forgotten the night of the ball so soon, Marie?"

The maid arose from her stool, and, winding her arms affectionately around the neck of her lovely mistress, whispered gently:

"My beloved Louise! You speak of love so bitterly, because you are ignorant of its divine, self-sacrificing nature. The affection you have hitherto known has been that you have given your father; but your heart has never yet been touched by passion. The admirers, whom you have considered lovers, are all selfish, worldly men, who have adored your wealth and beauty, rather than your soul. That they failed you in your need is nothing to excite wonder, or to fill your heart with bitterness against true lovers—"

"Have you ever seen a true lover?" interrupted Louise, sarcastically.

"Yes," returned Marie, softly, "and so have you."

"What nonsense!" cried her mistress, with a gesture

of impatience; adding, "if you know of such a man, pray name him!"

Marie bent gently forward and whispered in her ear:

"The man who dared to aid you is a true lover."

"Are you mad?" asked Louise, blushing suddenly. "Jean Louvet a true lover?"

By way of answer to these queries, the artful maid embraced the young lady more ardently, and fairly smothered her in a shower of kisses. While this demonstration lasted, she read the mind of her beautiful mistress, and, seeing that she seemed disposed to listen further, ventured to resume more boldly:

"Yes, this champion of yours is in love; for it was that which prompted him to help you."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Louise, drawing back in confusion.

"That he is desperately, madly in love; and that the person he worships so unselfishly is none other than my adorable, darling mistress."

And again Marie overwhelmed her with kisses.

Although the maid's declaration surprised her, it was hardly a revelation to Louise; for Jean Louvet's generous conduct had already aroused her suspicion. Indeed, it was impossible for her to believe that one who was a total stranger should have championed her cause from motives of an ordinary nature.

But, now that Marie had confirmed her suspicions, she began to reflect more seriously on the risks that this noble stranger had incurred on her behalf. True, he had assumed them voluntarily; nevertheless she had encouraged him to proceed, and felt that she had,

thereby, become a partaker in the responsibility of his undertaking.

The thought that there was at least one man who stood ready to lay down his life to insure her happiness was encouraging to the disconsolate girl, and determined her to battle bravely against despair. Jean Louvet had sworn to aid her in saving her father from the guillotine, and had said that he possessed resources which the greatest men might envy. In recalling their extraordinary interview, Louise remembered further how she had been inspired with a feeling of confidence by the stranger's noble countenance. It was certain that he was a gentleman, or he could never have approached her with such delicacy, offering to place himself at her disposal, without claiming her promised reward.

While she was indulging in these reflections, she beheld a man vault lightly over the fence that enclosed the little garden in the rear, and glide swiftly toward the house, casting furtive glances from side to side as he advanced. Although he was attired in the red cap and coarse blouse of a workingman, there was something so familiar in his graceful movements that her suspicions were excited, and, calling Marie to her side, she pointed down at the mysterious intruder, and asked,

"Have you ever seen that man before? It strikes me that he is not a stranger."

Marie examined the man's person and movements with keen attention. Then, catching a momentary

glance at his face as he looked upward, she cried out in great excitement:

"Why, it's Monsieur Louvet, as I'm an honest girl! He's come here with good news, God bless him!"

And, turning quickly toward the door, she ran clattering down the stairs to accord him a joyous welcome.

Louise was so startled by the girl's abrupt announcement that she became of a sudden weak, and was obliged to exert herself to the utmost to keep from fainting.

"Jean Louvet!" she murmured with fluttering heart. "What good, or evil tidings could have brought him here?"

Presently she heard the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs, and collected all her faculties for the approaching interview. In a few moments the footsteps stopped on the landing outside; the door of the parlor adjoining her bed-chamber slowly opened; and Marie bade Jean Louvet enter, saying,

"Be seated, *monsieur!* I will tell my mistress that you are here."

An instant afterward, the maid swept smilingly into the bed-chamber, and announced to Mademoiselle Vauban that her friend was in the parlor.

"Has anything serious happened?" inquired Louise, tremulously.

"No, deary," returned Marie, reassuringly. "M. Louvet wishes to consult with you, nothing more."

Pale and quivering with emotion, Louise arose, and walked slowly and unsteadily toward the apartment where Jean Louvet was awaiting her. On the thresh-

old of the door, she paused for a moment, to gain greater mastery over her feelings; then, forcing a smile to her trembling lips, advanced with outstretched hand toward her visitor.

Perhaps nothing appeals to the sensibilities of a true man so irresistibly as the spectacle of a beautiful woman in distress. Jean Louvet observed the pallor of Louise Vauban's countenance, the lines of acute suffering which contracted her brows, and the look of despair in her eyes. He would gladly have borne any torments to have relieved her of her anguish; but he felt utterly powerless, even to console her.

Oh, if he could have clasped her in his arms and comforted her with words of undying affection! If he could, only for one brief moment, have revealed to her the celestial passion that consumed his soul, by whispering the words which men have learned from angels —"I love you!"

Knowing that this was impossible, he merely clasped the hand she extended to him with a slight pressure, and remarked with cold politeness:

"Mademoiselle Vauban, you look worn and ill. You must take better care of yourself."

"Monsieur," she answered, smiling upon him sadly, "give me back my father, and I promise to recover my health and looks that moment."

She sank languidly upon a divan at his side, and resumed:

"I observe, Monsieur Louvet, that you are disguised. May I ask the reason?"

"Have you not heard of yesterdav's proceedings in the Convention?" he asked.

She replied in the negative.

"Then I will inform you," he continued, in that low, musical voice which he invariably employed when conversing with the gentler sex:

"On taking my seat in the Convention Hall, yesterday morning, I was convinced that the majority of Representatives were simply waiting for some bold man to denounce and accuse Robespierre. I know that he has many enemies, and believed that they would rise up and support such a motion, and that the tyrant would be overthrown by a *coup d' etat.*"

"What an audacious idea!" exclaimed the girl.

"True; but audacity is essential in some instances," he returned, calmly; continuing, "In fact, Mademoiselle Vauban, I ventured to denounce and accuse Robespierre myself, hoping that the majority of Representatives would support me. I endeavored to accomplish his downfall in the National Convention yesterday morning; but not a member stood forth to uphold me."

"What!" exclaimed Louise, her eyes flashing with enthusiasm. "Do you mean to say you defied Robespierre single-handed?"

"I acknowledge the folly," replied Louvet.

"And no one came forward to your aid?"

"Not a single man."

Louise bent forward impulsively, and seized his hands, saying:

"And you did this on behalf of my father?"

"Such was my design," replied Louvet, in tones of bitter disappointment.

The girl raised his hands reverently to her lips.

"Monsieur," she murmured, sweetly, "you are a brave and noble man. You have done all that you can for me and my dear father, and I implore you to abandon us to our fate. It would be a crime for me to urge you to further efforts; for I now know why you go about disguised. Having defied Robespierre, the Convention has declared you an outlaw—am I not right?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied Louvet with emotion. "Nevertheless, this very disguise will be put to good use. As to abandoning your father to Robespierre's vengeance, it would be impossible. I have already started a plot for his release, and it is too late to withdraw now. I have come here, not to speak of this matter, but to ask you to give me your solemn word that you will remain here in seclusion until everything is over. Will you grant me this request?"

"I will," answered Louise solemnly.

A short interval of silence followed, during which Louise leaned forward, with an elbow resting upon her knee, and a delicate, white hand supporting her rounded chin, in an attitude of profound reverie. Entranced by the charming pensiveness expressed in her countenance, Jean Louvet remained mute and motionless, with bowed head and clasped hands, offering up as an incense to this idol of his heart all the sublime, adoring, self-sacrificing emotions that filled it.

"She is communing with her God," he reflected, devoutly. "I will not disturb her."

By this it will be seen that he was, even as Marie had described him, a true lover. Nevertheless, like all other true lovers, he was attributing to the object of his adoration, higher and nobler meditations than those which really occupied her mind. For Louise, far from communing with her Creator, was in reality reflecting about him.

"I wonder why it is that this strange young man exerts such a wondrous influence over my will?" she mused. "He merely asks me to grant a request, and I consent without hesitation. Is it because he has proved himself worthy of my confidence? No; for I trusted him from the first. Is it that he is handsome, gentle and courteous? No; for Juvenal is far handsomer than this stranger; while D'Espernay is the gentlest of men, and Villeneuve is gallantry personified. What then can be the secret of his power? It must be that he is so daring, chivalrous and unselfish, that he is willing to sacrifice his very life for my sake."

Satisfied that she had solved the problem of his influence over her, Louise turned suddenly to Jean Louvet and said:

"You have requested me to remain here in seclusion until you have accomplished your designs—may I ask the reason?"

The unexpectedness of her query caused the young man to awake from his ecstacy with a start; but, recovering himself quickly, he replied:

"The reason I made such a singular request, mademoiselle, is because of my solicitude on your behalf. I believe you will not be molested so long as you re-

main quiet. Being assured of your safety, I can act boldly on your father's behalf, and concentrate all my faculties upon the object we desire."

Both were so intent upon the subject they were discussing that they failed to hear the creaking of footsteps on the stairs.

"But," said Louise anxiously, "it may be necessary for me to communicate with you in the meanwhile. Supposing, for example, that I should hear something about my father that would be essential to the success of your designs. To what place could I despatch a secret message?"

"If you'll promise not to resort to such a measure, unless the conditions are extremely urgent, I will reveal a place where I can always be found. And," he added, with the utmost confidence, "You must be sure of the trustworthiness of your messenger."

While speaking, he drew a slip of paper from his pocket, and, going over to a little desk in a corner, dipped a quill in an ink-horn and wrote down rapidly,

"Maison Rousseau"
"Rue ...."
"Faubourg Saint Antoine."

Then, after drying the ink with fine sand, he returned to the girl, and delivered the paper into her possession.

At that moment a few nervous taps sounded upon the door communicating with the landing.

Supposing that they were made by Marie—for it

HE DREW HIMSELF UP TO HIS FULL HEIGHT, AND CONFRONTED THE MERCILESS DESPOT FACE TO FACE.—*Page* 133.

should be remembered that neither she, nor Louvet had heard the footsteps that, but a moment before, creaked upon the stairs—Louise folded the slip into a tiny square, and, thrusting it for safe-keeping into her bosom, called out very graciously:

"Come in!"

At this invitation the person outside moved the door back slowly on its hinges, crossed the threshold, and, advancing toward them hat in hand, saluted Mademoiselle Vauban with an obsequious bow.

"Pardon me!" he said, smiling upon her with great affability; then, turning to Jean Louvet, whom he did not recognize in his disguise, he added in tones of biting irony, "I had no intention of interrupting such a delightful *tete-a-tete,* I assure you."

Louise sank back upon the divan speechless with terror; for the slender, elegantly attired person who stood before her was Robespierre.

As for Jean Louvet, he sprang quickly from his chair, stepped resolutely between the intruder and the frightened girl, drew himself up to his full height, and confronted the merciless despot face to face.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WOMAN'S SENSE OF HONOR.

For a brief moment Robespierre's face expressed the utmost astonishment at such singular behaviour on the part of the supposed workingman; but, when his keen perception had penetrated Jean Louvet's disguise, he glared fiercely back at him without attempting to dissemble the passionate hatred that filled his heart.

Louvet returned his ferocious, threatening glance with a look of supreme defiance. Indeed, while the tyrant's eyes blinked and emitted yellow, scintillating sparks, those of his opponent never quivered for an instant, but poured a deluge of terrible light into the dark recesses of Robespierre's perverted soul. Each realized that he was in the presence of his mortal enemy, and that there could be no reconciliation between them this side the grave.

Robespierre was the first to break the frightful spell.

Suddenly changing his aspect, he said with crafty politeness:

"So it is you, Citizen Louvet? Pray forgive me my impoliteness, which you may attribute to your disguise, I assure you!"

"Say rather to your tyranny," returned Louvet defiantly. "For it was you who suggested the motion by which I was declared an outlaw."

"Oh, yes, I remember now!" said the despot with assumed indifference; adding, "I believe it was you who demanded my accusation—was it not?"

"Yes, it was I who denounced you as a tyrant!" cried Louvet with fierce vehemence. "And let me warn you, cruel despot, that others will soon follow my example!"

Robespierre trembled slightly at this prophecy; then, motioning toward Mademoiselle Vauban with hypocritical solicitude, he said mildly:

"Pray contain yourself, Citizen Louvet! If you are angry with me, reserve your rage for another occasion. Remember that we are in the presence of a frail woman!"

He could not have employed a more effectual means of bringing the young man back to cool reason, than by appealing to his sense of respect toward the gentler sex. The thought that he had given way to his indignation in the presence of Louise Vauban filled him with such shame that he blushed to the roots of his hair. He was about to apologize for his rudeness, when the girl reassured him with a look, and, turning to Robespierre, remarked scornfully:

"Reproof on uncourteous behaviour comes with but a poor grace from you, M. Robespierre; for, if I remember rightly, you are not overcourteous yourself. It was not so very long ago that a lady of your acquaintance condescended to visit your lodgings on an

errand of mercy and love. How did you treat her, M. Robespierre? If my memory is correct, you ignored her appeals to your mercy, and, with unparalleled rudeness, turned abruptly on your heel and left the room. Is it not so, M. Robespierre?"

This sudden revelation of his conduct overwhelmed the artful hypocrite with confusion, which he endeavored to hide under the cloak of his zeal for the Republic.

"If I acted as rudely as you say I did," he replied with assumed ardor, "it was because my duty to the Republic required it."

"And does your duty to the Republic require you to intrude upon my privacy?"

"I have come here as a friend," answered Robespierre, throwing a significant glance toward his enemy, and then relapsing into silence.

Realizing that Jean Louvet stood in imminent danger of arrest, and that, if he delayed his departure much longer, escape would be impossible, Louise resolved to urge him to leave the house at once. So, advancing toward him haughtily, she made him a stiff curtsy, artfully contrived to present her back to Robespierre, and, casting upon him a passionate glance, which gave the lie to her chilling words and manner, said with assumed indifference:

"I am sorry, Citizen Louvet, that I cannot do anything to help you. I pardon your coming here in disguise; but I command you never to do so again. Even now I fear you have compromised my reputation as a true daughter of the Republic."

This studied speech was followed by a brief colloquy of glances. From Jean Louvet's eloquent eyes there flashed the anxious question:

"Are you safe alone with this man?"

To which the radiant orbs of the girl made answer:

"Perfectly."

Apparently satisfied with this mute reply, Jean Louvet put on an air of disappointment, sighed deeply, returned the lady's curtsy with a cool bow, and quickly left the room.

It may be asked—Why did Robespierre allow his mortal enemy to escape him, when he had him within his grasp?

The reply to this question can be given in a very few words. Jean Louvet was an athlete; Robespierre was weak and slender. Their meeting took place in the rear of a great mansion whose only inhabitants were two frail women. It is apparent, therefore, that Robespierre was in a position of far greater peril than his enemy.

If he had attempted to seize Jean Louvet, the latter would undoubtedly have overpowered him. If he had cried aloud for assistance, Jean Louvet would have throttled him on the instant. Moreover, it would have been impossible for him to have withdrawn quietly from the house, to bring citizens, or gendarmes, back with him, without allowing his enemy an opportunity to escape during his absence. Confronted with these dilemmas, the despot adopted the most prudent plan of awaiting a safer chance to ensnare Jean Louvet.

When the latter had been gone some minutes,

Louise turned sharply toward Robespierre and said haughtily:

"Well, sir, I am ready to receive your apologies."

"My apologies?"

"Yes, for intruding into my presence, or rather breaking like a thief into this house."

"As to intruding into your apartments, I will explain my reasons later. As regards your charge of forcible entrance, I will deny it most emphatically now."

Louise shrugged her shoulders and curled her lip in disdain.

"Nevertheless all the doors and windows were fastened," she said contemptuously.

Robespierre dipped into his pocket, and drew forth a great brass key, which he exhibited to the girl with an air of insolent triumph.

"Do you recognize this?" he asked.

Louise did not deign to reply; whereupon Robespierre continued in tones expressive of sorrow:

"That key belongs to your father, who gave it to me yesterday, with the request that I would take good care of his daughter after his death. You see he knows I am still his friend, although you scorn to believe it, my girl. And yet I see no reason for your doubting my sincerity."

While he was delivering this explanation, Louise glanced furtively at the key, and saw that it was the one her father was in the habit of carrying about his person. It fitted the huge brass lock of a private door

to the mansion, which was used by M. Vauban when returning from a late sitting of the Convention.

"Well, I will forgive the manner of your entrance," she said, somewhat mollified by this evidence of his truthfulness; adding, "but you have not yet explained the errand that prompted this visit."

"If I should tell you it was an unselfish one, you might doubt me again," said Robespierre.

"Not if you speak the truth," she answered frankly.

"Very well then, I will begin."

Saying which, he drew a chair near the divan to which she had returned, and, regardless of her evident mistrust, began his story.

"You blame me, Citizeness Vauban, for prompting your father's arrest. Well, allowing that I did, was I not right?"

"Right?" echoed the girl drawing back from him with a shudder of horror. "It was the act of either a lunatic, or a monster!"

"Alas!" exclaimed the despot in tones of genuine feeling, "must I always be misjudged for my most unselfish acts?"

"Unselfish?" cried Louise. "Why you must certainly have lost your reason, to condemn your friend to death, and call it unselfish."

Robespierre dropped his head upon his breast, and moaned like one in torture; but this expression of weakness lasted but a moment.

Suddenly he arose from his chair, and uplifted both arms toward the ceiling, crying aloud in a frenzy of enthusiasm:

"I call upon God to attest the sincerity of my motives!"

The next instant, he folded his arms across his chest, and fixed upon the terrified girl a glance that fairly blazed with fanaticism.

"Unselfish! Yes I repeat that I am unselfish!" he exclaimed, "For is it not an act of sublime self-abnegation to sacrifice one's dearest friends to the cause of humanity? I have sacrificed the witty and charming Desmoulins, and the lion-hearted Danton, because they stood in the way of our great Republic. And I have now imprisoned my most beloved friend, Vauban, because his wealth and prodigality proclaimed him an aristocrat at heart. Nor is that all," he added, completely carried away by his egotistic zeal; "if it were for the good of the Republic that I, myself, should be removed, most willingly, gladly would I mount the steps of the scaffold and bare, with my own hands, my neck for the guillotine."

During this impassioned declamation, Louise regarded him with a half frightened, half doubtful look, such as she might have bestowed on some curious, yet appalling, monster from another world. When he had finished, however, she smiled up at him with the confidence of one who has at last solved a difficult problem, and said with exquisite irony:

"It is apparent, M. Robespierre, that you consider yourself and the Republic of France as identical."

Perhaps the sublime egotist was abashed at her daring criticism, or it might have been that he had exhausted his powers of oratory in one fiery outburst;

for certain it is that his ardor suddenly cooled, and that he resumed his seat and composure at the same time.

When he had fully recovered his breath, he assumed an affable smile, and turned the conversation into a more peaceful channel.

"Pardon me, Citizeness!" he said, "for allowing my enthusiasm to draw me away from explaining the reasons for paying you this visit. However, I will make amends for my forgetfulness by revealing them now."

Louise observed that the lurid light of fanaticism had subsided in his eyes, and that their pupils had gradually contracted to mere peepholes through which craft, suspicion and falsehood peered out by turns.

"This wily man intends to entrap me," she reflected with the intuitive mistrust which so many women possess. "Well," she mused further, "it may be wise to learn his designs, so I will pretend to be duped by his cunning and lead him on to betray them."

Robespierre resumed:—

"My chief reason for paying you this visit," said he, "is to conspire with you to save your father from the guillotine. You cannot understand how dearly I love him, and how anxiously I have been plotting to save his head."

"You are very kind," murmured Louise, pretending to be deeply grateful, "and if I can help you to accomplish your noble purpose I will be very happy."

"I am glad to hear you speak in that way," returned

Robespierre in tones of satisfaction; "for I now feel certain that your father can be saved."

Louise expressed the liveliest joy at this assurance, and, falling upon her knees at his feet, cried excitedly:

"May God bless you for those words! Oh, I knew you would not let my father perish! But tell me, what must I do to save him?"

Believing that it was now time to broach his real purpose, the cunning despot placed his long hands upon her luxuriant tresses, and smoothed them with all the tenderness of a father. Then he began to unveil his treacherous design with an audacity that was wonderfully direct.

"To begin," said he, "I would like you to explain how it happened that you were harboring an outlaw in your house, at the time I came hither to visit you?"

Louise laughed gaily.

"Oh, it came about through no fault of mine, you may be sure," she replied. "M. Louvet came here uninvited and in disguise; and, as I knew him to be a Representative of the people, I very naturally admitted him when he told me that he was in distress."

"Then you did not know he had been outlawed?"

"Not then."

"Nor that he is planning to effect my ruin?"

"Why, such an idea is preposterous!"

And Louise broke out into another peal of laughter.

"You have no especial interest in Citizen Louvet's welfare?"

"How could I?" replied Louise, with difficulty re-

straining her emotions. "Why M. Louvet is no more than an acquaintance."

"Nevertheless he came here for protection and assistance!" exclaimed Robespierre, his brow suddenly darkening with suspicion.

Noticing this evidence of mistrust, Louise raised her eyes to the tyrant's face and asked innocently:

"But why do you ask these questions, M. Robespierre? What has this Louvet to do with my father?"

Robespierre bent close to her and whispered fiercely:

"Everything; for either one, or the other must perish."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the girl in mortal terror. "What do you mean by those words?"

The tyrant's countenance assumed a cruel, sinister expression.

"In affairs of this kind," he replied coolly, "it is generally wise to convey one's meaning by inference. But it is evident that with you I must make an exception."

"Listen!" he continued, fixing his snaky eyes upon her. "I have said that either this outlaw, or your father must inevitably die. It is the old story repeated of Jesus and Barrabas. It is an alternative between an outlaw and a noble man. I appoint you to choose between them. Come, which shall it be? Whose life shall be spared? Shall it be that of the outlaw, Jean Louvet? Or that of the good Republican, Alphonse Vauban?"

While he was giving utterance to these terrible words, Louise suddenly sprang to her feet, and re-

treated step by step to the opposite end of the parlor. There she stood, with both hands clutching the back of a chair, and her head thrown back, so that the astonishment and horror which blazed in her eyes threw a ghastly light upon her pale, set features.

"Have you come here to scoff at my misery?" she muttered faintly.

"On the contrary I have come here to relieve it," answered Robespierre; and he added, with a hoarse and jeering laugh: "Come, Citizeness Vauban, I am not to be deceived. That you know the secret hiding place of this Louvet is apparent. Tell me where I can find him, and I will release your father from prison; otherwise"—and here he snapped his fingers viciously —"I will see that your father is guillotined."

Having revealed his whole plan to the girl, he assumed his habitual melancholy expression, and began pacing the room with rapid, nervous strides.

Suddenly he heard a cry of inexpressible anguish; then a heart-broken sigh, a plaintive repetition of the words—"What baseness! What treachery! What inconceivable villainy!"—and finally a question addressed to him in a voice that shook his very soul.

"So you actually believe me capable of betraying an honest, noble friend into your power?"

He was silent.

The same voice rang out in quivering tones:

"No, not to save my father! Not to save myself! Not even to escape the pains of hell would I betray Jean Louvet!"

These words were quickly followed by the rustling

of silken skirts, and, ere Robespierre could recover from his chagrin, Louise Vauban appeared suddenly before him.

With the gesture of a queen, she pointed imperiously toward the door, and, transfixing him with the lightning of her eyes,

"Depart, vile wretch!" she cried defiantly.

With a look of intense hatred, the merciless despot obeyed her in silence, nor did he recover from his humiliation until he reached the open air.

CHAPTER XV.

ANDRÉ DEPARTS ON A MISSION.

LOUISE VAUBAN'S vigorous denunciation of Robespierre was followed by several important consequences.

When the tyrant entered her parlor, he had no knowledge that she was even an acquaintance of Jean Louvet. For the real object of his visit was to obtain from her certain desirable information, by pretending a deep interest in her father's fate, expressing a hypocritical sympathy with her misfortune, and offering to do all in his power to save his friend, Vauban. Having thus regained her entire confidence, he had no doubt that she would fall a victim to his treachery, and reply to his artful questionings out of pure gratitude and simple trust.

But, on beholding her in secret conference with the very man who had denounced him before the Convention, this design was immediately abandoned. His suspicions were aroused to a degree bordering on certainty; and, with the keen insight that characterized his intellect, he divined the nature of their relationship at once.

"So is was for love of Louise Vauban," he reasoned, "that this daring young man ventured to inflame the

Representatives against me. True he was defeated in his first attempt; yet it is evident that Mademoiselle will persuade him to try again."

Now, as Robespierre's friends in the Convention had described to him all that had occurred there, on the morning that Representative Louvet had demanded his accusation, the tyrant was fully aware that he had passed through a crisis which it would be perilous to disregard. Moreover, the bold St. Just had warned him that his enemies in the Convention were increasing, and that a repetition of Jean Louvet's act must be averted by prompt and resolute action. So the tyrant, now thoroughly alarmed, regarded Louvet as a dangerous enemy, who must be captured and executed at once to insure his own safety.

On discovering his friendship with Louise, therefore, he immediately conceived the design of making her the instrument of securing the person of this enemy.

"If I offer to release her father," he thought, "in exchange for this lawless traitor, she will doubtless surrender him, with all his associates, into my hands."

But, like many other well-devised plans, there was a flaw in that of Robespierre, which, but for the treachery of his own nature, he might easily have detected from the first. In making his calculations, he had neglected to include two things—a high sense of honor, and a spirit of true heroism to sustain it.

Having failed to corrupt the noble girl, he quickly returned to his lodgings, where he discovered his trusted barber in the act of ransacking the contents of

his wardrobe. His rage on beholding this spectacle has already been described.

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André the Barber waited calmly, until Robespierre had restored the paper to his pocket, and then, remarked good-humoredly:

"It is apparent that my dear patron has lost his temper this morning, or he would not speak so harshly to his devoted André."

Robespierre regarded him with astonishment.

"What!" he exclaimed, furiously, "am I to be defied and insulted by my very barber?"

"I insult you? I defy you?"

And André bowed his head upon his breast dejectedly, as if he had received a mortal injury.

Completely bewildered by his behavior, Robespierre began to think it possible that he had really wronged him. Yet he was resolved to probe the affair to the bottom, as recent events had thoroughly aroused his suspicions.

"Don't stand there like a whipped school-boy, you impudent rascal!" he cried; "but lift your head, and answer truthfully to my questions!"

André the Barber raised his face slowly, and then it could be seen that two crocodile tears were coursing down his cheeks.

"What were you doing in that wardrobe?" asked Robespierre, pointing toward the great mahogany case that contained his most cherished treasures.

"I was admiring the beautiful garments that adorn

your sacred person," and André succeeded in forcing two additional tears from his sorrowful eyes.

It would have been impossible for him to have given a more fortunate answer to the despot's query; for it had struck directly upon the most vulnerable spot in his armor. Robespierre continued in a milder tone:

"But what was your motive in searching my pockets, may I ask?"

"Curiosity," stammered the barber meekly. "Idle curiosity, nothing more."

"And was your inquisitiveness rewarded?"

"In one way, yes! In another, no!"

"Explain yourself!"

"I discovered that you are as neat as you are noble; for there was not so much as a speck of dust in your pockets. But," added André with a look of disappointment, "I greatly regret that I could find nothing to carry away as a memento of your friendship."

Robespierre's brow was beginning to brighten; yet he determined to ask one question more. Again drawing the paper, containing the names of his enemies, from his pocket, he held it close to André's eyes, and inquired with a penetrating glance:

"But had you found this list—would you have taken it as a memento?"

"I would have left it undisturbed," cried André; adding with pretended indignation, "Such a question is unworthy of you, Citizen Robespierre. It implies a doubt of my integrity."

"And what if I do doubt it?" returned the tyrant, with a sneer.

This time the artful André threw down the winning card.

"It would convince me that you are the biggest fool in France, and not the great apostle of liberty I have thought you," he cried, boldly.

"You speak in enigmas," said Robespierre.

"Yet they are easily solved," retorted André. "Let me explain: Would you not be a colossal fool to allow a man, whose honesty you doubted, to place a razor on your throat? Would you not be utterly unworthy of the confidence of the nation, if, threatened on all sides as you are, you invited assassination by exposing your precious life in such a foolhardy manner? You know as well as I, Citizen Robespierre, that the future of the Republic is in your keeping, and I would deem you the greatest of criminals, if you did not take every precaution to preserve your health and life for the welfare of the brave people who adore you."

This short, but eloquent oration was interrupted by a profound sigh that seemed to struggle up from the depths of André's heart; then, averting his face from Robespierre's, and feigning to brush the tears from his eyes, the artful barber resumed, in a voice half-choked with emotion:

"Alas! my noble patron doubts my honor, and naught is left me but to resign from his service."

Even Robespierre himself was no match for such consummate hypocrisy. In an instant all his faith and

trust in André returned, and, clasping him in an ardent embrace,

"What! leave my service, André? Never, my dear friend!" he cried. "If I have offended you, I ask forgiveness; for I trust you implicitly."

A reconciliation between hypocrites! What a subject for Moliere!

Nevertheless, it did not result as happily as it promised. For, notwithstanding his return of confidence, Robespierre was far too prudent to permit his barber to again have the freedom of his lodgings. On the contrary, he found an occasion that very day to dispatch him on an important errand far from Paris, which, in view of recent circumstances, poor André was obliged to undertake, although it prevented him from attending the midnight conference appointed by his Chief.

After he had departed on his mission, Robespierre stole quietly from his lodgings, and passed several hours in wandering aimlessly through the suburban fields. But, although his footsteps were erratic, his mind moved with marvelous precision toward the object of accomplishing the arrest and execution of Jean Louvet.

Having been foiled in his interview with Mademoiselle Vauban, his thoughts were next directed toward the accomplices who had rescued his enemy from the mob in St. Antoine. He now remembered that it was only on the preceding evening that he had himself ordered the arrest and immediate arraignment of these two men before the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

But what good could result from their execution? It would mean two suspects removed from his path; but could they not serve his purposes in a better way, if spared? If permitted their present freedom, it was probable that they would communicate with their Chief, and thus lead his spies to the place where he lay concealed.

With such thoughts still agitating his mind, Robespierre finally left off wandering, and returned quickly to his lodgings on the Rue Saint Honoré.

CHAPTER XVI.

SIMON EXPERIENCES A SURPRISE.

STILL pressing Madame Fontenai's letter close to his beating heart, Simon the Jailer accompanied the gendarmes to the dread chamber of the Revolutionary Tribunal. As he was a man of great moral courage, he walked between them fearlessly, thinking far more of the lady's letter than of himself.

"Is not this an extraordinary proceeding?" he inquired of one of his guardians. "Why, I have been accustomed to see prisoners consigned to the Houses of Arrest before being tried."

"Aye," was the surly response; "but yours is no ordinary case, Citizen. You stand accused of having rescued an outlaw from justice, you must remember."

"Then why not to the guillotine at once?" cried Simon the Jailer defiantly. "Why this mockery of justice, in forejudging my case at all?"

"You will be granted the privilege of defense, when you appear at the bar of the Tribunal."

Saying which the gendarmes bade him be silent and hurried him on.

The spectacle of a municipal jailer in the custody of two officers of the law was sufficiently novel to excite curiosity in many of the people, and, before they

had reached the great building, where the sanguinary Tribunal was then in session, they found it difficult to push their way through the howling mob.

"You're good at handling the *canaille,* you rascal!" said one of the gendarmes, laughing coarsely. "Come, let us see what you can do to help us out of this pressure!"

"Are you in earnest?" asked Simon, quickly.

The gendarme turned suddenly pale.

"Stir them up with one word and you're a dead man!" he whispered, fiercely.

A short time afterwards, they entered the gloomy chamber of the Tribunal, and Simon was conducted to a bench to await the calling of his case. As the terrible Fouquier-Tinville was in a rare mood for business, however, his patience was by no means exhausted before he was summoned to the bar.

"Your name?" asked St. Just, who was presiding.

"I am known as Simon the Jailer," replied the prisoner.

"Your age?"

"Twenty-eight years and a month to-morrow."

"Your present occupation?"

"A jailer in the Luxembourg Prison."

"You may be seated, while the Public Accuser presents his charges."

Whereupon, the two gendarmes, who still had him in their custody, seized him rudely by the shoulders, and hurried him back to the bench.

Almost at the same instant, Tinville stepped quickly forward, and read a short accusation, charging him

with aiding an outlaw to escape. When he had finished this preliminary, he suddenly burst out into a violent harangue, demanding the immediate conviction and condemnation of the accused.

"The prisoner may come forward!" exclaimed St. Just, when Tinville had concluded his short argument.

Simon the Jailer arose and advanced to the bar.

"Have you anything to say in refutation of these charges?"

"Nothing; since I am already forejudged," replied the prisoner.

The Judges, constituting the Tribunal, were in the act of consulting together, according to the perfunctory methods that characterized their proceedings, when a messenger ran breathlessly into the chamber, approached them hurriedly, and handed a letter to St. Just.

"It is from Robespierre, and must be read at once," he whispered, excitedly.

At this, St. Just broke open the seal; ran his eyes over the words of the message; after which he passed it to his associates to be read in turn. A brief consultation followed. Then St. Just turned quickly toward the prisoner, and pronounced his sentence in the following remarkable words:

"After considering your case very carefully, my good citizen, we have concluded to grant you an acquittal; for the charges against you are sustained by no evidences of your guilt in this affair." Then, turning to the gendarmes, "You may conduct the accused

to the Luxembourg and set him free," he added peremptorily.

At this unexpected termination to his adventure, Simon the Jailer was dumbfounded, nor was it until he had reached the Luxembourg that he was enlightened as to its real significance. Happening to again meet Madame Fontenai, he told her his entire story; whereupon she warned him urgently that he must maintain from henceforth the greatest vigilance against spies.

That he was deeply impressed by her advice will be seen by his subsequent conduct.

* * * * * * * * *

M. Tallien was hastening from the Convention Hall that evening, on his way to keep an engagement with a friend, when he was accosted by a man attired in the garb of a common laborer.

"Have I the honor of addressing Representative Tallien?" he asked, respectfully lifting his cap.

"Yes, I am Citizen Tallien," was the answer. "What do you desire of me?"

"You have a dear friend in the Luxembourg Prison, I believe?" ventured the laborer timidly.

M. Tallien started and turned pale.

"How do you know that?" he inquired, anxiously.

The man lowered his voice to a whisper and replied quickly:

"M. Tallien, I am the bearer of a letter to you from Madame Fontenai. She assured me that you are her

IT WAS AN ELOQUENT APPEAL TO HIM TO SAVE HER.—*Page* 157.

dearest friend, and so I consented to risk my life to bring it to you."

"But who are you?" asked Tallien, suspiciously.

"My name is Simon, and I am employed as a jailer in the Luxembourg."

Apparently satisfied with this explanation, Tallien exclaimed, eagerly:

"The letter! The letter! Give it me!"

Simon the Jailer drew a sealed packet from his blouse, and slipped it into M. Tallien's hand. Then he turned on his heel and walked rapidly away.

When he had disappeared from view, M. Tallien turned aside into a neighboring wine shop, and, taking a seat in a secluded corner, proceeded to read Madame Fontenai's letter.

It was an eloquent appeal to him to save her. Her entreaties for herself were accompanied by expressions of the most ardent solicitude on his behalf. She called upon him to save his own head from the guillotine.

She asserted that she had positive information that he was doomed. His fiery audacity had offended Robespierre. Moreover, he was a Dantonist, against whom lay many grudges. Fawning upon the tyrant would have no effect now. If Tallien and his friends, Bourdon, Fréron, Barras and the others, did not throw off their lethargy immediately, they would all certainly perish.*

"Every word she has written is true," muttered Tallien, thrusting the missive deep down in his pocket.

* Carlyle's French Revolution, Vol. III.

"I have had words of ill-omen, so has Bourdon, while Robespierre hates Fréron and Barras."

And he hastened from the wine shop with a terror in his heart greater than that which had hitherto inspired him.

Meanwhile, the workingman was cautiously making his way toward the Faubourg St. Antoine.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRANCOIS RESORTS TO STRATEGY.

On finding himself a prisoner in M. Barrere's chamber, François the Idler elevated his eyebrows, puckered up his lips, and emitted a low, prolonged whistle indicative of surprise. Then he ran quickly to the door and rattled it with great violence.

"'Tis useless to resist, *monsieur*," cried one of his guards through the key-hole; "for, even if you succeed in forcing the door, you would simply be killed for your pains."

"Which would mean the guillotine for all of you!" was François' defiant rejoinder.

And, giving the door an additional rattle, he turned about and strode boldly toward the windows.

On reaching the one to the right, he tore aside the curtains, unloosened the fastenings of the sash, and swung it wide open on its hinges. At he same moment a warning voice called up to him from below,

"Stand back, or we'll shoot you dead, *monsieur!*"

François threw a hasty glance in the direction of his threatener, and beheld two armed men, standing within close range, covering him with the muzzles of their muskets. Realizing now that escape by force was

impossible, he saluted the men derisively, and shouted back:

"I did not intend to alarm you, good citizens! I had no idea of escaping; but merely opened the window to admit the air."

With these words, he withdrew from the opening, and began pacing the chamber, deep in thought. While pondering on some means of regaining his liberty, he chanced to glance casually upon a table.

Suddenly he came to a dead stop; gazed fixedly at some object on the table; then, darting eagerly forward, and snatching it up in his trembling hands,

"*Mon Dieu,* it is the Chief's letter!" he cried, triumphantly.

For a brief moment he hesitated, debating in his mind whether he was warranted by his peculiar circumstances to read it; then, having come to the conclusion that it would be no breach of honor to do so, he sank into an armchair and perused it from beginning to end.

Being as shrewd as he was bold, François recognized at a glance that Jean Louvet held some secret power over Barrere. One sentence of the epistle in particular contained a world of mysterious meaning, and François vainly endeavored to penetrate its significance. It was this:

"I might remind you of the obligations you owe me for past benefits, and put this request in the nature of a command; but I prefer to trust to your friendship."

Having read this passage for perhaps the twentieth

time, François contracted his brows and reflected shrewdly in this wise:

"The Chief would never have written these words, unless he had this purse-proud upstart at his mercy; therefore would I not be justified in pretending to know their secret, and frightening Barrere into submission?"

"At least," he reflected further, "it is a stratagem worth attempting, and may succeed if carried off with an air of audacity."

So, he again approached the door, and shouted authoritatively to the guards outside, "Fetch M. Barrere hither! I am weary of awaiting his pleasure."

"But my master has no desire for an interview," came back the insolent reply. "He is amusing himself in watching the road for the coming of the gendarmes."

"Do you love your master?" roared the prisoner; "or would it please you to see him guillotined?"

Before the lackies could reply, M. Barrere himself reappeared upon the scene, crying, angrily:

"What means this shouting, rascals? I'll have no more of it!"

Recognizing his voice, François shouted boldly:

"So you have seen fit to return, my high and mighty aristocrat?"

"Silence!" exclaimed Barrere, savagely.

"What!" cried François in amazement, "and permit you to contrive your own ruin? Never, while I possess a knowledge of Jean Louvet's past benefits to you, *monsieur!*"

The startled Barrere being utterly unable to reply to this, François pressed his advantage still further.

"My master placed confidence in your friendship," he went on; "but, alas! you have forgotten all you owe him."

Then, in order to cap his stratagem with a fitting climax, François the Idler raised his voice to its highest pitch, and made the house tremble with his threats.

"But an end to all courtesy!" he thundered. "This man is incapable of gratitude! Therefore away with all pretense of friendship, and resort to extremities at once!"

Pausing for a moment to give emphasis to his words, François roared out:

"Harken, Barrere! In the name of Jean Louvet, whom I serve, I command you, on peril of your life, to comply with his request!"

These menacing words, uttered so imperatively, filled the heart of M. Barrere with consternation.

"Can it be possible," he thought fearfully, "that this stranger knows my secret?"

For he was not aware that the prisoner had just read Louvet's letter, which he had carelessly left in his chamber, and could put no other construction upon his words. At first, therefore, he was dreadfully frightened; but presently the remembrance that Jean Louvet was now a condemned outlaw, renewed his courage and complacency to such a degree, that he found voice to reply insolently:

"In the name of your master indeed, poor fool! Why Jean Louvet is an outlaw and a beggar."

"Say rather 'poor fool' to yourself!" laughed François, "for despising the power of one, whom the Convention outlawed through abject fear, and before whom even the great Robespierre trembles. As regards such a poor creature as yourself, Barrere, he has but to raise his little finger, and you perish!"

"You exaggerate, *monsieur*," returned Barrere less confidently.

"Then I'll speak out and you'll understand my meaning!"

At this, Barrere became so thoroughly convinced that the prisoner knew his secret, that he fell to trembling more violently than ever.

"If you wish to explain, good citizen," he answered meekly, "pray allow me to unlock the door and enter!"

François growled a reluctant consent; whereupon Barrere unlocked the door, and crept cautiously into the apartment to confer with him.

François the Idler, who was reclining complacently in a chair, motioned his visitor to take a seat beside him; and, when the latter had complied, he turned upon him fiercely, and, assuming a knowing look, asked suddenly:

"Are you anxious for me to explain? Shall I recount all the benefits you have received from Jean Louvet, the man whom you imagine to be a beggar?"

"Is it true that I called him a beggar?" asked Barrere.

"Yes, and an outlaw as well," cried François, with a threatening scowl; adding contemptuously, "but what more could be expected from such a base ingrate?"

"Alas, *monsieur!*" exclaimed Barrere, completely deceived by François's strategem. "I see you know my secret, and will save you from reminding me that your master, Jean Louvet, saved my neck from the guillotine. I had entered into a conspiracy, which it is unnecessary to explain now, and would certainly have perished but for his assistance. All my friends had deserted me, I was neither rich nor influential; but your mysterious master befriended me by means of a secret and extraordinary power. So, if I doubted his ability now to protect me in this affair, I beg you to forgive me for my baseness, and to accept my most humble apology."

François looked him straight in the eyes.

"Then you will give this bachelor dinner in Robespierre's honor?"

"Not only will I give it," replied Barrere with enthusiasm, "but I will place Jean Louvet in charge of every detail."

François arose from his chair, and said grandly,

"You have saved yourself from ruin by your gratitude."

Having thus succeeded in his errand, he took Barrere's arm, and they both emerged from the chamber walking side by side.

François restrained his joy until he had passed beyond sight of the villa; but then he indulged his emotions in repeated outbursts of laughter.

"If I keep improving in strategy at this rate," he reflected, "I'll soon be a match for the Chief, who

knows more about the game of politics than any diplomatist in Europe.

As by this time night was approaching, he quickened his pace to a brisk walk, which he kept up until he approached the Faubourg St. Antoine. But, as he entered the tortuous lanes and byways of this gloomy quarter, he slackened his gait and crept stealthily toward the dismal wine-shop he frequented.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONSPIRATORS REPORT TO THEIR CHIEF

SHORTLY before midnight, on the same evening, two men might have been seen moving cautiously along a narrow alley, with the secret air of bravos having some villainous business in hand.

One was following the other at a distance of five or six paces, stopping when he stopped, and advancing when he advanced, without increasing or diminishing the space between them.

The man in front was attired in the red cap and dingy blouse of a workingman; the one who followed was decked out in all the finery of a dandy of the period. The workingman cast many a furtive glance over his shoulder as he proceeded, apparently on the lookout for skulking spies, or watchful gendarmes. The dandy, however, kept his eyes fixed straight before him, and swung a walking stick carelessly in his hand as he advanced.

After making their way in this suspicious manner for some distance, the workingman turned quickly into a little lane, and, after penetrating it until he came to a walled garden, vaulted lightly over the barrier into the inclosure, and crept rapidly on hands and knees to a concealed door in the rear of a pretentious mansion.

He had barely time to rap a summons on the oaken panels, when tne dandy sprang nimbly into the garden, and followed close on his trail to the secret door.

In the meantime the workingman had been admitted to the mansion, and his steps were distinctly audible, as he ascended a stairway in the interior.

Having knocked like his predecessor for admittance, the dandy was in his turn permitted to enter the doorway, and, a moment afterwards, the light tapping of his dainty heels announced that he also was ascending the stairway.

These nocturnal prowlers were none other than two of Louvet's agents, returning to the Maison Rousseau in obedience to his commands. Indeed, so prompt were they in keeping their appointment that, ere the last echo of their footfalls had died away upon the stairs, the clock of a neighboring tower struck the hour of midnight.

"You are prompt in keeping your appointment," said Louvet, as Simon the Jailer entered the chamber of conference.

And a moment afterwards, he added:

"And you also are prompt, François," as the young dandy made his appearance.

A number of their fellow agents, who had arrived before them, were occupying chairs opposite Jean Louvet's table, conversing in low, eager tones, while awaiting the stroke of the gavel to announce that the secret session had begun. The two new arrivals immediately joined them, but did not participate in the whispered discourse.

Ten minutes—twenty minutes—half an hour passed by, and yet the gavel did not sound its call.

Meanwhile Jean Louvet's resolute face became more anxious and expectant each minute. He threw frequent glances toward the door, and, at every trivial sound that disturbed the silence of the venerable mansion, bent eagerly forward in an attitude of attentive listening.

"Why does the Chief postpone the hour of conference?" asked François of his comrade Simon.

The Jailer elevated his brows and shoulders in that eloquent gesture which signifies "Don't ask me; for I am as much in the dark as you, my friend!"

A short time afterward, the conspirator who had charge of the secret door, entered the apartment quietly, and handed Jean Louvet a sealed note. The Chief glanced at the address calmly; but, on recognizing the peculiarities of the handwriting, changed color, muttered angrily, and tore the missive open with trembling fingers.

It could be seen that an expression of alarm passed over his face, as he hurriedly read its contents. But a moment later, he regained his composure, and, taking up the gavel, rapped with it sharply upon the table, with the words:

"Attention, *messieurs!* Attention, *mesdames!* The meeting is called to order, and we will proceed to business at once."

Immediately all conversation ceased, and every eye was fixed upon the venerable Dr. Narbonne, who, in his capacity of secretary, arose from his place beside

Jean Louvet, and read from his book of minutes the proceedings of the previous meeting. On his resuming his seat, the Chief proceeded with the usual order of business, until he finally reached the call for the reports of the political agents under his command. After several of both sexes had reported progress in the business intrusted to them, Jean Louvet beckoned Simon the Jailer to approach his table; for the mission upon which this conspirator had been sent was of a particular and secret nature.

"Well," asked Louvet, as Simon bent low across the table, "what news? Have you done anything as yet?"

"Madame Fontenai wrote the letter you prompted, and I delivered it to M. Tallien this evening."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Louvet, with a pleased smile; adding, "Have you anything else to report?"

At this Simon the Jailer bent closer toward his Chief, and hurriedly related the story of his arrest, trial and acquittal.

"On what charge were you apprehended?" asked Louvet.

"I was accused of rescuing the outlawed Representative, Jean Louvet, from the fury of the mob."

"Then how came you to be acquitted?"

"I believe it was through Robespierre's interference."

"Indeed?" asked Louvet, in amazement.

Then he relapsed into thought, from which he quickly aroused himself to repeat Madame Fontenai's shrewd warning to the Jailer, to beware of skulking spies.

When Simon the Jailer had returned to his seat, Louvet called François the Idler to draw near.

"And what have you to report?" he inquired anxiously.

"That M. Barrere has not only consented to give the banquet you suggested; but is desirous of surrendering the arrangements, in all their details, into your hands."

Jean Louvet could hardly restrain his astonishment.

"Can it be possible," he asked eagerly, "that such a conservative man complied with the request of an outlaw so generously?"

François regarded his Chief with a curious smile.

"Ah, thereby hangs a tale!" he whispered significantly; and, bending closer to Jean Louvet, gave him a highly-colored narrative of his adventures.

The reports of the agents having been received, the Chief of the conspirators dismissed the meeting, and withdrew with Dr. Narbonne into the latter's study. There he produced the letter the door-keeper had handed him, and read it aloud to his wise friend and counselor. It ran as follows:

"Most honored Chief:—

"I have followed your instructions and placed my life at hazard, in attempting to get possession of the list you require. So far I have failed; but I have at least discovered where it can be found, and will continue my efforts to procure it. I was unable to attend the conference to-night for this reason: My patron has sent me on a private mission, far from Paris, which,

under the circumstances, I was compelled to undertake. In three days, however, I will return from my journey, and will then probably succeed in procuring the paper you desire.

"André the Barber."

"Well," asked Dr. Narbonne, when he had finished, "I suppose that means a postponement of your plans?"

"On the contrary," replied Louvet, deliberately, "It means that we must proceed with them with increased vigor."

"But the list, my dear master," protested the cautious old gentleman. "I was under the impression that it was essential to your success."

Louvet arose from his chair with a gesture of impatience.

"It is too late to think of that now," he cried desperately, "the game has already begun, and the least delay would prove fatal. We must play our cards just as we hold them, and not wait for another deal. Do you know," he added, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, and looking into the doctor's face with an expression of intense anxiety—"Do you know," said he, "that I met Robespierre face to face not later than yesterday?"

The Doctor gaped up at him in amazement.

"Yes," continued Louvet, "and in the presence of Mademoiselle Vauban. He cast upon me a look of intense hatred, and I could read his heart so well, that I realized at once he is about to destroy everyone who stands in the way of his ambition with one compre-

hensive blow. That blow may be expected to fall at any time now, and the only hope we have of adverting it is by prompt and vigorous action without regard to consequences."

"With the list in your possession you might possibly succeed," said Dr. Narbonne, incredulously; adding, "Without it you are certain to meet with failure."

Jean Louvet retired into his own apartment to reflect long and doubtfully upon his future proceedings. The morning was already breaking in the east, when he lay down to enjoy a few hours of repose, muttering as his head struck the pillow,

"I will take Narbonne's advice. I will await André's return before I go on. For that list of Robespierre's enemies is absolutely necessary to my success in this affair."

Such were his reflections as he dropped into unconsciousness; nevertheless, his first act, after breakfast on the following morning, was to select an effectual disguise, steal out unobserved from the Maison Rousseau, and strike into the winding road that led in the direction of Clichy.

Moreover, on arriving at M. Barrere's villa, he sought an interview with that rich republican at once, and, before leaving to return to Paris, had perfected every detail for the banquet.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BANQUET.

In requesting his friend, Barrere, to give a dinner in Robespierre's honor, Jean Louvet was actuated by a shrewd political motive. A few words will be sufficient to explain it.*

M. Barrere was regarded as one of Robespierre's intimates. But M. Vauban also had been considered a close friend of the tyrant. Nevertheless, M. Vauban had been arrested. Might not the same fate befall M. Barrere?

If this thing should happen during the dinner given in Robespierre's honor, it could not fail to strike terror into the hearts of all the Representatives present; for who among them could feel that his head was safe, when the despot condemned even his nearest friends to the guillotine? It was for this reason that Jean Louvet had requested M. Barrere to invite Robespierre's chief opponents to the entertainment.

But what reasons had he to suppose that such an event would happen?

The strongest reasons possible. Like M. Vauban, M. Barrere was a very wealthy man. He indulged

* Vilate gives a lively description of the remarkable dinner, given by Barrere, in his villa at Clichy, which Carlyle refers to briefly in his great history.

in high-rouged pleasures, and surrounded himself with elegance. His villa at Clichy was almost a palace, and his manner of living there magnificent to a degree.

Jean had learned from André the Barber that Robespierre was bitterly opposed to such ostentation, which he regarded as a sure indication of aristocratic tendencies. Indeed, it was on account of his extravagant display, that M. Vauban had incurred his despotic friend's displeasure. Moreover, in order to make the reason for his arrest obvious to all, it had been timed to take place during the very height of the festivities given in the Incorruptible One's honor. Was it not almost certain, therefore, that the same dramatic scene would be re-enacted during M. Barrere's dinner?

The fact that Robespierre was known to be meditating a master stroke of politics, to rid the Republic of his remaining enemies, as well as those friends who had departed from democratic virtue, rendered such an occurrence a foregone conclusion, and Jean Louvet had planned artfully to bring it about.

But he did not intend to sacrifice his friend, Barrere, to his own designs. On the contrary, his arrest was intended to arouse such fear in the hearts of the Representatives present, that they would be prompted to desperate action by the next move Louvet made.

In fact, it was through this next move that he hoped to accomplish Robespierre's downfall.

André the Barber had seen the tyrant examining a list of those he intended to destroy. Louvet had directed him to procure it at any hazard; and, as An-

dré was possessed of extraordinary shrewdness and courage, his Chief was warranted, notwithstanding his first doubts, in hoping that he would succeed in the attempt.

The list once in his possession, it would be a simple matter to send it to M. Tallien, enclosed in a letter from Madame Fontenai—Simon the Jailor acting as their go-between—requesting her lover to carry it with him to Barrere's dinner, and, if his host should be arrested, to take advantage of the consternation of the guests, to read the names of the condemned then and there.

Now, as the majority of the guests were to be Representatives opposed to Robespierre, it was easy to foresee the result. Finding themselves already condemned to the guillotine, they would combine in a body against the tyrant; confronted by certain death, they would be inspired with such supreme terror, that their former fear of incurring the despot's displeasure would sink into insignificance, and the instinct of self-preservation would actuate them to attempt his downfall, as the only chance of escaping destruction themselves.

But André the Barber had failed to return from his mysterious mission; nor had the slightest intelligence been received from him regarding the list he had promised to procure. What could be the reason for his delay and silence? Jean Louvet could not tell. All that he knew of the matter was this:

It had placed him in an appalling situation.

True, it was still possible that André might get possession of Robespierre's paper, perhaps at the eleventh

hour, if not sooner; but, as he had not been informed of its use in Louvet's plot, he would not know what to do with it. Accordingly, Louvet had commissioned François the Idler to seek out his comrade, on his return to Paris; tell him of the banquet at Clichy; and command him to forward the stolen document to Barrere's villa, either through M. Tallien, or by any other safe means he could devise.

Louvet knew that he was taking desperate chances in thus hoping against hope; but he dared not abandon such a skillfully arranged plot, until the last moment. Then if he were doomed to disappointment, he would resort to a forlorn expedient which offered but the remotest possibility of success.

Early on the morning of the appointed day, Jean Louvet walked calmly into Dr. Narbonne's study, and announced, abruptly:

"I am going out."

"Going out?" cried the Doctor in alarm. "Where?"

"To Clichy, to attend Barrere's bachelor dinner."

"What madness!" exclaimed Dr. Narbonne. "You would be recognized and arrested at once."

"That is hardly probably," answered Jean; "for I intend to assume a disguise."

"A disguise?"

"Yes. I have arranged with my friend, Barrere, to attend his dinner in the capacity of a lackey. He has sent me a suit of his livery, and I have the art of disguising my countenance, as you well know."

"But why must you attend this dinner?" asked Dr. Narbonne, anxiously.

"To direct events into their proper channels."

An hour later, a young man, attired in the gorgeous livery of M. Barrere's household servants, emerged from the Maison Rousseau, and walked briskly in the direction of Clichy. On arriving at his master's country seat, he went straightway to the banquet hall, where he joined his brother lackeys in preparing the table for the approaching feast.

As a number of extra servants had been engaged for the occasion, the fact of his being a stranger was not remarked. It was noticed, however, that he performed his duties with hesitation, and was not an experienced servant.

M. Barrere's banquet hall was on the first floor of the villa, and opened on one side upon a broad veranda, from which a flight of steps led down into a beautiful garden. As the day was extremely hot, all the windows were left open, so that the perfumes from this flowery domain were wafted into the apartment, to mingle with the odors of rare and delicate blooms that adorned the table.

If the air had been cooler, these odors would have been delightful. As it was, they contributed to the oppressive effect upon the senses of the heated atmosphere.

This circumstance is mentioned, because, trifling as it appears, it proved of vast moment to the future history of France.

The hour set for the dinner was one in the afternoon, and the first of the guests began to arrive shortly after midday. They were received by M. Barrere in his re-

ception room, where they were soon joined by others, and formed into little groups, buzzing with wit and laughter.

Among the earliest of the arrivals was M. Tallien. Jean Louvet studied his face closely, as he passed by him through the hall, but could observe nothing to indicate that the fatal list was in his possession. His countenance was placid, and his manner careless and easy.

Shortly before one o'clock, Fréron put in his appearance, accompanied by Carnot, Collot d'Herbois, Bourdon and Barras. Passing into the reception room, they received the greeting of their host, and then formed a group around Tallien.

At last one o'clock arrived; yet Robespierre had not come.

Was a repetition of the Vauban affair to occur? It was evident that the guests thought so; for, as minute after minute passed by, their faces became more and more anxious. They whispered, cast furtive glances toward the door, and then pitying looks at their smiling host.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Louvet repressed his mortification, on beholding these expressions of anxiety. For they informed him that his plans were moving just as he had anticipated; that the time was fast approaching for his master-move; and yet, for want of a mere scrap of paper, all his deeply laid designs were doomed to failure.

The thought of it rendered him desperate.

"The finger of fate is in this," he reflected, bitterly.

"It is evident that I must now await my chance to carry out my last resource."

He was standing in a doorway, from which he could observe all that occurred in the reception room, when a hand was laid lightly upon his shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear:

"A word with you, Chief."

Turning toward the speaker, he recognized at a glance, André the Barber, although he was disguised as a lackey like himself.

It would be impossible to describe the joy that filled his heart at this unexpected meeting with his agent. In the surprise of the first moment, he stood motionless and dumbfounded; then he was seized with an ecstacy that prompted him to sing and dance.

For did not Andre's presence at the banquet, and in disguise, prove conclusively that he had Robespierre's list in his possession?

"The sight of you fills me with joy!" he exclaimed. "It inspires me with assurance of success!"

If he had not been so elated, he might, perhaps, have remarked that André did not respond to his greeting with the enthusiasm it merited.

"Come, my dear fellow," resumed Louvet, "explain to me how you contrived to get here?"

"Follow me into the garden, and I will tell you all."

"But that might attract attention," replied Louvet, laughing softly.

"No; for I have been ordered there to cut more roses for the table. I take you with me to assist—do you understand?"

"Perfectly," was the gay response; and Jean Louvet motioned his agent to lead on.

When they had passed down the flight of steps, and had entered the garden, the Chief resumed his questioning of his agent.

"So you were sent upon an errand?" he asked, in a spirit of playfulness; adding in tones of pretended sternness, "By whom?"

"Why I told you in my letter," returned André, in surprise.

"You mentioned a patron, but not his name," said Louvet.

"I left that for you to surmise."

"Which I did, by guessing he was Robespierre. Come, tell me where he sent you, my good André?"

By this time they had reached a secluded spot, and were completely surrounded by rose-bushes, which bent beneath the weight of buds and full-blown flowers. Wherever they looked, their eyes were delighted by a profusion of exquisite colors; whenever they breathed, they inhaled delicious odors.

"Come, answer my question," Jean Louvet repeated. "Where did the tyrant send you?"

"Nowhere! Nowhere!" cried André, with an oath. "He despatched me on an errand to get rid of me."

"To get rid of you? For what reason?"

"Because he suspected and feared me;" and André fell vigorously to work, culling roses for the table.

Until then, Jean Louvet had been thoroughly convinced that his agent had at last succeeded in procuring the desired paper. Indeed, his sudden display

of gaiety on first recognizing him was but the natural consequence of his belief that such was the case. But André's strange answers to his questions had somewhat shaken his confidence, and he resolved to ascertain the truth at once. So, without changing his tone, or manner, he remarked, casually:

"It would have been wiser in Robespierre, your patron, to have suspected and feared you before;" adding, "It can avail him nothing to be cautious, now that you have secured his list."

André suddenly stopped in his work, and looked shame-facedly upon the ground; observing which, his Chief resumed more sternly:

"Is it not so? Come, don't stand moping there; but raise your face and answer me like a man!"

At this André uplifted his face, down which huge tears were trickling, and broke out, with a gesture of disappointment:

"Alas, Chief! Your plot is doomed to miscarry; for I have failed you!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE FATAL LIST.

"FAILED me?" cried Jean Louvet, aghast, "What do you mean?"

"That it was impossible for me to steal the list you needed."

Louvet's face became pale beneath the paint that disguised it; but he never lost his composure for an instant.

"Pray explain why it was impossible to secure this list?" he demanded.

"Because Robespierre carries it with him wherever he goes. It is never out of his possession."

And André explained in detail all the circumstances of his search through the tyrant's apartment, and of the latter's surprising him in the act of going through his wardrobe.

Louvet heard him through attentively, and then asked:

"But why do you say that this document is never out of Robespierre's possession?"

"It is the inference that any logical mind would naturally draw from the circumstances of the case. Robespierre put on a new suit, just before leaving his lodg-

ings, and, behold! when he returned home, the list was in the inside pocket of his new coat."

Louvet reflected for some time before again speaking. When he did so he asked:

"Do you mean to say that, if Robespierre should grace this dinner with his presence, the paper could be found upon his person?"

"Exactly."

"What makes you so certain of this?"

"Because I was present when he removed the new clothes I spoke of, and put on the suit he usually wears when wandering about the fields."

"What! does he change his dress so frequently?"

"Yes, and the fatal list with it. On the occasion I mentioned, I saw him remove it from the coat pocket of his new suit, to that of the one he put on before taking his usual stroll."

The Chief stamped his foot in vexation.

"Oh, if Robespierre would only attend this dinner!" he exclaimed. "In that case, something might be done yet."

While he was uttering these words, the sounds of carriage-wheels attracted his attention; and, looking toward the villa, he beheld a modest conveyance rapidly approaching the *port-cochére*. In a few moments it drew up in front of the house, four men alighted, and proceeded to mount the steps leading to the entrance.

Louvet uttered an exclamation of mingled joy and astonishment; for one of the men was Robespierre.

The despot was accompanied by his brother, Augus-

tin, and two of his chief lieutenants, Couthon and St. Just. He was attired in his favorite sky-blue coat, black breeches, and silk stockings, and was evidently in a cheerful state of mind.

As he passed through the door with his companions, a murmur could be heard in the house, expressive of the satisfaction occasioned by his arrival.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Louvet, suddenly changing from jubilation to disgust. "Just hear those servile fellows, André! But a moment ago, they were filled with gloom and silence, because they trembled at the absence of their master. Now that he has arrived, however, they are exultant, for they believe that they are, for the time at least, safe." He paused a moment reflectively and added, "Are you sure he has the list with him, André?"

"Unless he has destroyed it, yes!"

"Then we must devise some means of getting possession of it," said Louvet, with resolution. "Indeed, it is more important to my purposes, since Robespierre has come to this dinner, than ever it was before. For his honoring the entertainment by his attendance, will lull the anxiety of his enemies, and they will need a positive proof of his intention to destroy them to arouse them from their torpor."

"I fear we have an impossible task before us," groaned André.

"That remains to be seen," was Louvet's gloomy response.

On reentering the house, they found the guests all seated at the banquet table, which groaned beneath

the weight of an abundance of costly viands. Robespierre occupied the seat of honor, at the right of his host, while near him sat St. Just, Couthon, and his brother, Augustin. Tallien, Fréron, Barras and others, who were his political opponents, occupied seats at the opposite end of the board.

M. Barrere was an admirable host, and, under his skillful guidance, the conversation was directed into pleasant channels. Politics were avoided; the most light and airy themes suggested; and, as the wine passed around, wit and laughter sparkled and flowed.

Toward the end of the dinner, Robespierre's sallow face became suddenly pale, and he sank back half fainting in his chair. M. Barrere sprang to his assistance on the instant.

"What ails you, friend Robespierre?" he inquired anxiously, as he passed his arm around the tyrant's shoulder to support him.

"Nothing, but a passing faintness," was the weak reply. "The oppressive odor of your flowers sickens me."

"Then allow me to conduct you out of doors, where you can breathe more freely."

Augustin Robespierre seconded the suggestion of the considerate host, and assisted him in conducting the fainting man to a shaded corner of the veranda.

While the excitement caused by this incident was at its height, two lackies might have been seen, whispering earnestly together in a pantry adjoining the banquet hall.

"Do you know what has happened?" asked one, anxiously.

"Do you refer to the fainting spell that has overcome Robespierre?"

"Yes," whispered the other, quickly; adding, "It has suggested to me an idea."

"An idea, Chief?"

"I have said it," returned the other, whom the reader has probably recognized as Jean Louvet. "Let me explain it at once," he added, hurriedly; "for, if feasible, it must be executed immediately."

"Proceed, I am listening," answered André.

"It is this," went on his Chief: "Being overcome by the heat, it would be but a simple act of courtesy on my part to suggest removing the tyrant's coat, in order to relieve him of its burden. Of course," he added, with a meaning glance, "it is unnecessary for me to explain what I will do afterwards."

This suggestion meeting with André's unqualified approval, Louvet hastened to the veranda, bearing a tray containing an iced sherbet in his hand, and, approaching the group surrounding Robespierrre, remarked anxiously:

"I have had experience in such cases, good citizens, and I trust you will not consider my advice insolent. I have just made this cooling sherbet for Citizen Robespierre, and I am sure it will greatly revive him."

The group immediately parted, to allow the considerate lackey to approach the sick man, who was lying back in a state of collapse, gasping for breath.

Without an instant's hesitation, the lackey placed the

invigorating drink to his lips, and persuaded him to sip it. Then he burst out in the authoritative tones permitted only to a nurse, or a physician:

"Why, *monsieur*, can it be possible that you have not removed your coat? Come, off with it at once, or it will smother you!"

Slowly, suspiciously, the crafty tyrant rolled his yellow eyes toward the lackey's countenance, and remarked in a voice, half-audible, yet resolute:

"My coat shall remain where it is!"

Having pronounced this ultimatum, Robespierre closed his eyelids, and relapsed into his former silence.

Jean Louvet retreated from his side, with the consciousness of having sustained a humiliating defeat; yet he had made certain of one important thing beyond the shadow of a doubt. The tyrant had convinced him, by the tone and manner in which he had refused to part with his coat, that the paper so necessary to the success of his design, was actually in one of its pockets.

Although rebuffed in his first attempt, Louvet was not the kind of man to acknowledge himself hopelessly vanquished. On returning to the banquet hall, therefore, he devoted a considerable time to reflection. Retiring into a pantry, where he pretended to be busy in preparing various articles of table service for the courses that were yet to come, he mused in this wise:

"André is undoubtedly right in his conjecture that Robespierre invariably carries that list of his upon his person; otherwise, he certainly would have adopted my suggestion, and removed his coat. He clings to it with such tenacity, that it puts me to my wit's end to devise

a means of getting hold of it, even for one brief second. I would require no longer time to accomplish my purpose."

Of a sudden he started so violently, that the dish he then held in his hand fell crashing to the floor.

For a novel idea had occurred to him.

"I'll fetch this sly fox when he returns," he muttered; and walked quickly back into the banquet hall.

Noticing that the faces of all the guests were flushed with wine and heat, he quietly approached Barrere and suggested:

"You may not be aware of it, *monsieur*, but the heat is becoming excessive. I would advise you, therefore, to invite your guests to remove their coats."

Recognizing the voice as that of Jean Louvet, M. Barrere understood this hint to be a command, and acted upon it without the least delay. Rising from his chair, he cried out cheerily:

"Come, citizens, off with your coats! The heat is too intense to be burdened with them longer."

And, setting the example, he removed his own garment, and handed it to Jean Louvet to hang in an adjoining closet. Immediately every man at the table did likewise—all but the fainting Robespierre, who was still recovering from his illness in the open air.

Having succeeded so far in his design, Jean Louvet went further, and, again drawing near his supposed master, bent down and whispered respectfully in his ear:

"If Robespierre refuses to follow your example, twit him with being an aristocrat."

"Thank you for reminding me of the oversight, my worthy fellow," cried M. Barrere, loud enough for all his guests to hear; then addressing the assemblage he added, in cheerful tones: "That lackey is a perfect treasure, citizens!"

When Robespierre returned to the banquet hall, a short time afterward, he seemed highly amused to find all the guests in their shirt sleeves. He made no attempt, however, to remove his own coat, until his host, in obedience to Jean Louvet's instructions, said to him, laughingly:

"Come, Citizen Robespierre, you must not be the only aristocrat in this democratic gathering. Off with your coat, my good friend, and prove your republican spirit!"

Robespierre hesitated; but, realizing that a leader of his boasted republicanism could hardly refuse such a simple request with consistency, he threw off his sky-blue garment, with a sickly smile of reluctance, and handed it to Jean Louvet to take care of. He probably reasoned that he could take this risk with safety; for what man in France would venture to rifle the pockets of the great Robespierre?

The dinner over, M. Barrere conducted his guests into the garden to enjoy the air, and then it was that Louvet executed his master move.

While carrying Robespierre's coat to the closet, he stealthily thrust his hand in its inside pocket, and found a paper which proved to be the fatal list. His first impulse was to steal it; but, on further reflection, he doubted the policy of such an act, for these reasons:

Presented by himself, it might pass as a forgery, and be disregarded. In order that it should produce the result he desired, some one, whose name was upon it, must find it in the tyrant's coat.

So he looked the list over, and saw that the first name written down was that of Representative Carnot, a man of great courage and influence.

"The very man for my purpose," he reflected, as he thrust the paper quickly back in its hiding place. "He is fortunately present, and is approachable, even by a lackey."

It was not long, however, before he discovered that in this he was mistaken; for, although Carnot was not the kind of man to rebuff any person who approached him, still it was a difficult matter to obtain from him a secret hearing.

Indeed, M. Carnot was so witty and agreeable that his society was in constant request, and, whenever he attended a social function, of a public, or private character, he was invariably surrounded by a host of obsequious admirers.

This occasion being no exception to the rule, Louvet soon realized that he must make a desperate attempt to obtain an interview, or be defeated in the end, by seeing Robespierre depart from the villa with the list on which so much depended in his possession. So, regardless of social observances, he walked boldly down into the garden, and approached M. Carnot and his friends with the utmost confidence.

"Citizen Carnot," he said, very gravely, "perhaps you are not aware that I am a devoted friend of yours."

"Indeed?" answered the Representative, with an amused glance at the company.

"Yes," said the supposed lackey, more gravely than before, "I have come here to prove my friendship beyond a doubt."

"In what way, may I ask?"

"If you will grant me a brief interview, I will tell you."

And Louvet directed such a compelling glance upon M. Carnot, that the latter turned from his friends and immediately accompanied him to a place where they could converse unheard.

No sooner had they reached this covert, than the lackey turned suddenly toward him and whispered in urgent, passionate tones:

"M. Carnot, I have just discovered that your life is in deadly peril, and have come here to warn you that, unless you act promptly, it will be too late."

Carnot turned upon him a look of incredulity.

"My life threatened? By whom?" he asked.

"I have no time to explain," was Louvet's earnest answer; "for, if I should be seen with you, it would excite suspicion. I implore you, therefore, to listen to what I say! Go back to the house at once; hasten to the closet, where the guests' coats are hanging, and seek out that of Robespierre. It hangs on the third hook from the right wall, and you cannot fail to recognize it from its sky-blue color. In the inside pocket you will find a list of those whom Robespierre has doomed to destruction. Your name heads it!"*

* At Barrere's bachelor dinner, writes Carlyle, "The day be-

Carnot waited to hear no more.

In fact he walked toward the villa so rapidly, that Louvet feared he would attract observation. On entering the banquet hall himself, shortly afterward, he encountered the Representative coming from the coat-closet with an expression of haggard terror upon his white face.

"Was my warning not true?" he whispered, quickly.

"Oh, *Mon Dieu*, yes!" groaned the terrified man, as he rushed wildly forth to seek his friends.

coming so hot, it is said, the guests stript their coats, . . . whereupon Carnot glided out; groped in Robespierre's pocket; found a list of forty, his own name among them; and tarried not at the wine cup that day." It was the discovery of this list which resulted in the mysterious, nocturnal councils, that precipitated the rapid onrush of events terminating in Robespierre's downfall

CHAPTER XXI.

EVENTS CROWD AND JOSTLE.

As Carnot was passing hastily down the steps of the veranda, he met Robespierre and his party returning to the villa.

"You seem to be in a vast hurry, citizen," remarked Robespierre, suspiciously.

"Yes," answered Carnot, with an effort to appear calm. "I have lost a valuable stud, and have been searching the floor of the banquet hall in hopes of finding it."

"Did you look in the coat-closet for it?" inquired Robespierre, with a crafty twinkle in his yellow eyes.

Carnot started guiltily.

"Why, no—why no," he stammered. "In fact—it never occurred to me—to look for it there."

Robespierre fixed upon him a penetrating glance, full of distrust and malevolence, and passed on into the house. In the banquet hall, he encountered the lackey to whom he had intrusted his coat.

"My friend," said he, "did you observe a man come out of that closet a moment ago?"

"One of the guests was here just now," answered Louvet, who was the lackey in question; "but he did not go near the closet."

"What was he doing?"

"He appeared to be looking for something," answered Louvet, at random.

Robespierre heaved a sigh of relief and his face brightened.

"Well, bring me my coat," he said. "It is time I returned to Paris."

In the meantime, Carnot was hurrying, here and there, through the garden, holding brief, excited conferences with his friends.

To Tallien, he said:—"Our heads are in danger. Meet me at my house at midnight."

To Fréron:—"There will be a meeting at my house at twelve to-night. If you do not wish to perish miserably, attend it."

To Collot d'Herbois:—"Come to my residence at midnight. The tyrant is meditating mischief."

To Barras:—"The Republic is threatened. If you would save yourself, do not fail to visit me to-night at twelve."

To Bourdon, Thuriot, Lecointre and others:—Instructions to the same effect.

There was no returning to the wine cup that day.

Robespierre and his partisans having first taken leave, his opponents did not tarry long behind them. Jean Louvet, whose keen eyes were open to everything, noticed the disturbance and hurry of their departure, and rubbed his hands together, delightedly.

Meeting André the Barber in the hallway, when all was over, he whispered:

"A political storm is brewing. Now listen to my

directions: a secret meeting will undoubtedly be held somewhere to-night. It will be a gathering of Robespierre's enemies. You must find out when and where it will take place, and bring me word at the Maison Rousseau."

* * * * * * * * *

It was given out by the doorkeeper of M. Carnot's residence that evening, that his master was ill, and could receive no visitors. At an earlier hour than usual, the house was closed for the night, and every window darkened.

Nevertheless, shortly before midnight, a number of mysterious visitors began to arrive, singly and on foot. They entered the mansion through the basement door; but not until after they had made a careful examination of the street to assure themselves that they were unobserved.

Shortly after twelve o'clock, these persons were all gathered in M. Carnot's library, on the second floor, anxiously awaiting the news they had come to hear. Their host was pacing the room in evident agitation, and the wild glitter in his eyes filled them with alarm.

Suddenly he strode excitedly to the fireplace, and, turning upon his heel, broke out in trembling accents:

"My friends, I made a startling discovery this day. You remember that, at the conclusion of the dinner at Barrere's, we all went forth into the garden for the air. While there, I was approached by one of the servants, who told me that my life was threatened, and

that, if I would save myself, I must obey his directions."

M. Carnot paused a moment, to gain better control of his trembling voice, and then proceeded:

"You may recollect that we had all stripped off our coats, on account of the heat, and that they had been hung in a closet adjoining the banquet hall. Well, this honest servant directed me to go back into the house instantly, enter this closet, and search in the inside pocket of Robespierre's coat for a document that would enlighten me as to his meaning. I did so, and found the paper he referred to. On opening it, I saw that it contained a list of names, in Robespierre's handwriting, with this heading inscribed above:

"'*Traitors whose Heads the Republic Requires.*'

"You can imagine my consternation, friends, when I saw that the first name on the list was my own. There were about forty other names, as near as I could judge; but I had no time to read them all. I managed, however, to make out a few of them, and then, fearing discovery, I thrust the paper back into Robespierre's pocket, and hurried forth into the garden."

The fright and amazement produced by this revelation were indescribable. The faces of all became ghastly, and a tremor passed through every frame. Finally Tallien ventured to inquire, in tones of dread:

"Was my name on the list, Carnot?"

"It was."

"And mine?" asked Fréron.

Carnot bowed his head gravely in assent.

At this, there arose a chorus of terrified inquiries

from the others, to learn if their names also were among those of the doomed. Carnot motioned for silence, and said seriously:

"The only other names I saw on the list were those of Barras, Bourdon and Collot d'Herbois. They were directly underneath my own, and, therefore, were comprehended in the hasty glance I threw upon the paper. You should remember, friends, that I was running a great risk, and that it was impossible for me to examine closer. I can assure you, however, that there were over forty names in all, and that no man among us can consider himself safe."

This announcement was followed by a long period of silence, broken at intervals by suppressed ejaculations, sighs and groans of fear.

Tallien was the first to shake off this dreadful apathy.

"Bestir yourselves, my friends!" he cried. "This is no time to give way to fright. Something must be done, and that without delay."

"Alas!" returned Bourdon, dejectedly. "What can be done against the all-powerful Robespierre?"

"Nothing, without firmness and daring," replied a voice from the library door.

Every head was turned quickly toward the speaker; every face became rigid with fright; while the eyes of all grew big with amazement, on beholding the figure of a strange young man, standing erect and motionless upon the threshold.

* * * * * * * * *

Jean Louvet had returned from the dinner at Clichy, and was sitting with Dr. Narbonne in the latter's study in the Maison Rousseau, when a sharp knock sounded on the door.

"That must be André returned from his errand," he muttered, as he arose to admit the late visitor.

In this surmise, however, he was mistaken, for François the Idler entered.

"Ah, so it is you, François?" said Louvet, motioning the young man to a seat.

"Yes, Chief," was the response. "I have come here to bring you bad news."

"Well, what is it?"

"In the first place," returned François, gloomily, "it grieves me to inform you that a friend of yours is in the gravest peril. As I was passing by the Conciergerie Prison, this evening, I saw three tumbrils drive up to the door, loaded with prisoners whom the Revolutionary Tribunal had condemned to the guillotine to-morrow."

"Presently the prisoners came forth from the carts, and I recognized among them M. Vauban."

Louvet uttered an exclamation of despair.

"Is it possible that Robespierre's vengeance is so swift?" he cried.

"Secondly," went on François, without noticing the interruption, "I happened to stroll into the Jacobin Club on my way hither, and, while loitering there, in gossip with several of the members, Robespierre rushed suddenly into the hall. Pale and quivering with excite-

ment, he mounted into the tribune, and delivered a fiery speech to his admiring associates.

"He informed them that the time had arrived to clear the National Convention of all traitors, and said, further, that it was his intention to reappear among the Representatives on the eighth of Thermidor, to denounce these traitors and demand their accusation."

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Louvet. "Why the eighth of Thermidor is to-morrow."

While these words were still quivering upon his lips, another knock resounded on the door.

"Can this mean more bad news?" he said, hurrying forward to open it.

Simon the Jailer entered.

It was unnecessary for him to explain that he was the bearer of evil tidings; for every lineament of his honest face expressed it. Seeing this at a glance, Jean Louvet cried out, anxiously:

"Don't keep me in suspense; but deliver your message at once."

Simon advanced a few steps, and then stopped, motionless and mute; yet there was something in the look he gave his Chief which caused the latter to tremble.

"Why are you silent?" he asked, in agonized tones. "For mercy's sake, speak, man! Speak!"

Thus urgently appealed to, Simon shook his head sorrowfully, and replied, in a voice barely above a whisper:

"Oh, my dear Chief! It is indeed a woeful tale I bring you,"—then, pausing for a moment as if to collect his courage—

"Madamoiselle Vauban has been arrested!" he exclaimed, despairingly.

The groan that escaped Jean Louvet was terrible to hear. For a moment he staggered, and seemed about to faint. Then, by a supreme effort of the will, he summoned all his faculties to his aid, and asked, with forced composure:

"Do you know the prison in which she is confined?"

"She is in the Luxembourg," answered Simon, "and under my charge, thank God!"

"Then we need not despair for her yet," said Louvet, grimly.

With the imperious look of a man, who is determined to conquer all obstacles, he walked firmly to his chair, and sat down. Then, burying his face in his hands, he began to reflect deeply; observing which, Simon and François withdrew into an adjoining apartment, while Dr. Narbonne took a book from the table, sat down in an armchair, and pretended to be profoundly interested in its contents.

Thus an hour passed by.

At its expiration, a third knock broke the silence.

"That must be André at last," said Louvet, wearily.

This proved to be true.

"Well?" he said, half-hopelessly, as André drew near to report to him; for he was fully prepared to hear that his agent had failed in his mission.

"I have hastened here to inform you, Chief, that I have followed your directions," answered André, "and that I have succeeded in discovering the meeting place of Robespierre's enemies."

This encouraging announcement aroused Louvet to instant action.

"At what hour, and where do they meet?" he asked, eagerly.

"The time is twelve to-night; the place, Representative Carnot's residence."

Louvet looked at his watch.

"It is now a little after eleven," he said. "So I must make haste, if I would arrive there in time."

While speaking, he hurried into the room where Simon and François were conversing, and ordered the latter to change garments with him at once. A few skillful applications of paint to his countenance completed his transformation; and, thus disguised, he left the Maison Rousseau, and walked rapidly towards the place of secret meeting.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GAME GROWS EXCITING.

BEFORE M. Carnot and his friends could recover from their surprise at his sudden appearance, the stranger, noticing the fright depicted on their faces, advanced boldly into the room, and said, reassuringly:

"Do not be alarmed, for I am a friend. Indeed, I have a right to participate in your deliberations, as my peril is fully equal to your own."

"Don't you think, *monsieur*, it is rather presumptuous for you to intrude where you are not wanted?" asked Carnot, coldly.

The stranger turned to him with an amused smile.

"It certainly would be, Citizen Carnot," he replied, with seeming effrontery, "were it really true that my presence here is an intrusion. On the contrary, I would certainly have been requested to attend this meeting, had you known that I was in Paris, and where to find me."

He waited a moment to enjoy the surprise this remark produced in his hearers, and then exclaimed suddenly:

"Look this way, my friends, and behold who I am!"

And, drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he rubbed the paint from his face, and revealed the hand-

some and resolute countenance of their fellow Representative, Jean Louvet.

Exclamations of astonishment were heard on all sides. M. Carnot sprang up and accorded him a hearty welcome; while the others, following his example, pressed forward to embrace him, each in turn.

"Why, I thought you had fled from Paris!" exclaimed Tallien.

"And I, that you had committed suicide," said Fréron.

"For my part," put in Barras, "I never believed that you would either run away, or kill yourself; for you are much too brave to resort to either measure."

After thanking them for their expressions of interest, Louvet asked suddenly:

"Have you decided upon anything?"

"We were discussing a certain list that I found in Robespierre's pocket," explained Carnot, inviting him to a seat beside him on a sofa. "It contains the names of Representatives whom the tyrant has selected for the guillotine. But, as you must be ignorant of its existence, I will relate my adventure for your benefit."

"That will be unnecessary, for I know all about the list."

"But that seems scarcely credible."

"Nevertheless, I was the man who told you where to find it," answered Jean. "To be explicit, I was at Barrere's dinner in the character of a lackey. So you see I know as much as any citizen here. Therefore, I ask again what have you decided to do?"

The Representatives looked at one another perplexedly, and remained silent.

"I see how matters stand," said Louvet, as he drew forth his watch. "You have come to no decision at all, notwithstanding that you have been deliberating for an hour. It is now past one o'clock, and the time at your disposal is very limited."

Then, suddenly changing his tone, he continued, with a countenance illumined with ardor:

"My friends, there is but one course to pursue. You must act boldly and at once. The least delay will prove fatal; for Robespierre is about to destroy you. If you had been at the Jacobin Club, this evening, you would have known how imminent is your peril. Shall I tell you what happened in that den of assassins? Robespierre entered the hall, and strode boldly to the tribune. He mounted it with a smile on his crafty face, and addressed his associates with his usual confidence. He informed them that it was his intention to reappear in the Convention to-morrow morning; denounce his enemies as traitors to the Republic, and demand their accusation and execution. Knowing this, would not further hesitation on our part be a crime?"

He paused a moment to cast a flashing glance over the eager faces around him, and then resumed, in tones of passionate eloquence:

"Shall we allow this vile tyrant to destroy us? Shall we permit him to become the absolute dictator of the Republic? Or shall we rise up, and assert our manhood, by denouncing him to the entire nation, and accusing him publicly of his crimes? You may say

that this would be a desperate move; that his power is so great that it would be impossible to break it; that all those who participated in such a rash attempt would be destroyed.

"This may be true; but it is the only course left open to us. If we remain quiet, we are lost. If we rise up against our oppressor, we may save ourselves. It is the only hope we have, and it would be folly to disregard it.

"It is now past one o'clock. The Convention meets at ten. We have, therefore, nearly nine hours in which to act. Come, which shall it be—hesitation, cowardice and certain death? or prompt decision, courage and a possible hope of salvation?"

He had not long to wait for an answer; for his words had produced a marvelous effect upon his listeners. With one accord they crowded round him, crying:

"We will act! We will combine against our oppressor! There shall be no vacillation; but we will rise up boldly and defy Robespierre. Will you, Jean Louvet, who was the first to denounce him, be our leader, and direct us how to act?"

A smile of satisfaction illumined Jean Louvet's face at these expressions of confidence; and, without a moment's hesitation, he drew a chair to the library table, and assumed immediate direction of affairs.

"How many names were on the list?" he asked, with a glance at M. Carnot.

"About forty, I should judge."

"And how many of them are known?" inquired Louvet.

"I had only time to read my own name; Tallien's, Fréron's, Bourdon's and those of Barras and Collet d'Herbois."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Louvet, with a smile indicative of pleasure. "That leaves about thirty-four doubtful names—a sufficient number to strike terror into the hearts of at least a hundred Representatives, and bring them over to our side."

He spread a sheet of paper before him on the table, picked up a pen, and continued:

"Now let us make a list of names of Representatives who are likely to support us. How many members can you count upon, Citizen Carnot?"

"Besides those present, not more than six."

"Their names, please?"

Carnot gave them. Jean now turned to Tallien.

"And how many supporters have you, my friend?"

"I think I can rely upon ten, or twelve."

And Tallien repeated their names slowly, as Louvet wrote them down upon the paper.

He asked the same questions of all the others present, and then, announcing that there were over one hundred names in all, issued the following command:

"I shall rely upon you, citizens, to notify your supporters of their peril before daylight. They must each and every one be informed of Robespierre's list of the doomed, and of the probability that their names are included in the number. The uncertainty will be more effectual in arousing them to action, than even the most positive knowledge. They must all be made to promise that they will support you in the Convention tomorrow

in denouncing, and accusing Robespierre, as a despot. Thus a new and formidable party will spring up, like a mushroom, over night, and the tyrant will be thunderstruck, and, perhaps, overthrown."

Expressions of approbation were heard on all sides, and Tallien suggested:

"As our new political party has sprung into being in the month of Thermidor, let us christen ourselves and followers the 'Thermidorians.' "

This proposition meeting with the approval of all, the new party was from that time so entitled.

"And now, my friends," said Louvet, arising from the table, "permit me to resign the direction of your affairs into other hands. I have shown you how to act, and can do nothing further to assist you, excepting to advise you to disperse immediately, and communicate with your friends. Remember that, in this affair, promptness is of the utmost importance. If you follow out my directions, and act with daring in the Convention to-morrow, you may possibly save your heads; otherwise you will lose them to a certainty. Farewell, my friends! I must be going; for I have other work to do."

"Do you mean to desert us, Louvet?" asked Bourdon, in alarm.

"On the contrary, I intend to place myself completely at your mercy."

"What do you mean?" asked Carnot.

Jean Louvet drew himself up to his full height, and cast a majestic look upon his questioner.

"That I have such confidence in the fidelity and

courage of my friends," he answered, loftily, "that I am going to the Conciergerie to deliver myself up as a political outlaw, and calmly await rescue at your hands."

With these words, he waved a final farewell to the company, and, heedless of their protestations, withdrew from the meeting.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AMONG THE CONDEMNED.

On leaving Carnot's residence, Jean Louvet hurried back to the Maison Rousseau; for he knew that time was pressing. It was close to three in the morning, when he re-entered the Doctor's study.

The worthy man was sleeping in his armchair, but, aroused by the entrance of his Chief, opened his eyes, sleepily and inquired:

"Well, what news?"

"I have accomplished all that lay in my power," responded Louvet, wearily, "I have set the ball rolling, and it remains with Robespierre's enemies in the Convention to do the rest."

"Do you believe our exiled party will profit by the upheaval?"

"Eventually, yes," answered Louvet; adding, "When powerful factions disagree, it inevitably results in the advancement of some one of them. But where are André, Simon, and François? I have certain directions to give them ere I depart."

"Surely you do not intend leaving us again?" said Dr. Narbonne.

"Yes, my beloved friend," answered Louvet, with a

strange softness in his voice. "I am going away presently, and, perhaps, it may be forever."

"Forever?" cried the Doctor in tones of alarm. "What do you mean? Where are you going?"

"To the Conciergerie to surrender myself to the jailer."

"By all that is sacred!" exclaimed Dr. Narbonne, turning suddenly pale. "What prompts you to such an act of madness?"

"A firm resolution to either save my friend Vauban, or perish with him."

"Oh, my beloved master!"

The Doctor could say no more, for his voice was choked with sobs. Louvet embraced him tenderly, and whispered words of encouragement in his ear. Then, rising to his feet, he again inquired for his agents.

"They are resting in the adjoining chamber," said the Doctor; adding, "Shall I call them?"

"No," answered Louvet. "I can do that myself."

And, going over to the door communicating with the room referred to, he opened it softly and entered.

François, Simon and André were reclining in three armchairs, sleeping in their clothes. It was evident that they were greatly fatigued with the onerous work they had recently performed, for their slumber was heavy.

"Poor comrades!" muttered Louvet, regarding them with deep affection, "It pains me to awaken you; but it cannot be avoided. God alone knows when you can sleep again!"

Advancing quickly across the room, he aroused them

each in turn; and, when they were sufficiently awake to comprehend his words, informed them of his intentions. All three protested vigorously against his going to the Conciergerie; but they spent their breath in vain; for he gave them plainly to understand that his determination was irrevocable, and that no argument could persuade him to change it.

"And now that you know my mind on that point," he added, "please listen to my final instructions: You, François, have this mission to perform: As soon as Paris is awake, go to Jacques the Blacksmith, and endeavor to gain his support to our cause. Argue with him in this fashion: No true friend of the Republic can deny that the National Convention represents the people; for its members were all elected by the people's votes. He will, undoubtedly, agree to this. Then inform him that his beloved Robespierre intends to paralyze the Convention, by sending a large number of its members to the guillotine. If he denies this, ask him to visit the Convention Hall to-day, and listen to Robespierre's speech.

"Insist that Robespierre is ambitious, and is planning to override the people through their Representatives in the Convention, and establish himself as the supreme dictator of France. He believes you to be a true patriot, and will, undoubtedly, be influenced by what you say. As he is a power in the Faubourg St. Antoine, he will prove a friend worth having."

He next turned to Simon the Jailer.

"My directions to you, comrade, will be very brief," he said. "I merely require you to inform Made-

moiselle Vauban that I have done my best to save her father. Tell her that I am still working in his behalf, and that I know of her incarceration in the Luxembourg. Assure her that I am not without hope of success; but, if failure should be the result of my plans, I will perish with those whom I have struggled to rescue."

To André the Barber he gave these directions:

"Your acquaintance with Robespierre and his friends will doubtless enable you to gain much valuable information concerning their intentions. If you learn anything of importance, carry the news immediately to M. Tallien, for he is the shrewdest and most daring of all Robespierre's enemies. And now," he added, with an expression of infinite relief, "disguise is no longer necessary. I will change suits with you, François, and, in my own character, as a Representative of the people, go forth to challenge fate."

It required but a few minutes to effect the transfer of raiment that converted this man of mystery into Representative Jean Louvet. At the conclusion of the transformation, he embraced his comrades, and left the Maison Rousseau, perhaps, forever.

On reaching the Conciergerie, between the hours of six and seven, he requested an interview with the chief jailer, and was shown into a small office to await the great man's convenience.

In order that the time might pass less drearily, he amused himself by studying the little room. But one window lighted it, a long bench extended along the wall behind him, and a high desk against the wall

opposite. Two sickly-looking clerks, mounted upon tall stools, were at work behind the desk, pausing at intervals to cast an inquiring look in his direction.

At the expiration of half an hour, the chief keeper of the prison swaggered into the office; and, casting a contemptuous look upon his caller, asked gruffly:

"Well, what is your business?"

Louvet answered mildly:

"I am Representative Jean Louvet, who was accused some days ago by the Convention. I have come to surrender myself as a prisoner."

"Have you been tried and condemned?"

"Not as yet," was the reply.

"Then why do you come here?" snarled the jailer. "Don't you know that this prison is only intended for those who have been condemned to the guillotine?"

"Yes," was the complacent answer; "but as the Convention offered a price for my capture, I considered it equivalent to condemnation."

A gleam of avarice shot from the jailer's eyes.

"So you came here that I might gain the reward?" he asked.

Louvet read the man's thoughts on the instant.

"When a fugitive voluntarily surrenders himself," he answered, quietly, "the question of a reward is eliminated. However," he added, indifferently, "if you are really anxious for the money, I am perfectly willing to help you obtain it."

"Tell me how?" cried the jailer, eagerly.

"Why, the affair is simple enough," remarked Louvet. "By admitting me to your prison, you can logically claim to have captured me in the streets, bring-

ing me hither for safe keeping. Afterward, I have only to corroborate your statement, and you receive the Convention's reward."

"And what does that amount to?"

"Some five thousand francs, I believe."

During this colloquy, the two sickly clerks paused in their work to listen. At its conclusion, the jailer turned upon them gruffly, and sneered:

"Oh, never fear, *mes enfants!* you'll get your hush money."

Then, beckoning Louvet to follow, he led the way into the prison.

That part of the Conciergerie into which Louvet was thrust consisted of a long hall, or corridor, flanked on both sides by rows of cells. At the time of his arrival, the prisoners had just finished breakfast, and were enjoying the hour of exercise allowed them by the regulations.

When he had seen the cell he was to occupy, he was permitted to mingle with the unhappy beings, until the time for locking them in their narrow chambers should arrive.

He computed that there were about seventy-five persons in the corridor, of all ages and conditions of life. Some were sitting on board benches; some were pacing to and fro, their heads bowed and their eyes fixed despairingly upon the ground; others stood in groups, conversing gravely in awed undertones; while a few, too weak to control the agony of their souls, were weeping and wailing lamentably.

Searching eagerly among these poor doomed creatures, Jean Louvet finally discovered his friend,

Vauban, sitting on a bench with a little girl upon his knee. He was speaking to her in a gentle tone of voice, and with a radiant smile upon his face, that rendered its expression almost angelic.

On seeing Louvet approaching, a cloud passed over his brow, and his voice trembled, as he greeted him.

"So you also have been condemned, Citizen Louvet? Believe me, I am deeply grieved to see you here."

Louvet sat down by his side, and began speaking in rapid undertones.

"Yes, I am here; but I am not condemned as yet. I have come, M. Vauban, to save you, if I can, or else to perish with you. Ask no questions; but listen attentively to what I say. A tempest will break out in the Convention this morning, which may result in the overthrow of Robespierre. In that case we may be saved yet, if we can gain but a day's time. Are you to be sent to the guillotine to-day?"

M. Vauban bowed his head in assent.

"At what hour?"

"The tumbrils leave here at two this afternoon."

A despairing groan issued from Louvet's lips.

"Alas!" he cried wildly, "what can I do to save you?"

"Do not concern yourself on my account, my good friend," returned Vauban, cheerfully, "I assure you, I am perfectly resigned to my fate."

"Ah, but Mademoiselle Louise, your daughter," said Jean in tones of anguish; "she is not resigned."

M. Vauban's lips trembled, and great tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Oh, why do you remind me of her?" he moaned.

"Because I wish to inspire you with resolution to save yourself for her sake," replied Louvet.

"Is such a thing possible?"

"If I can delay your departure for the guillotine until tomorrow—Yes!" was the resolute answer.

"But how about your own case?" asked M. Vauban.

"I shall not be sent to the guillotine today, as I have not yet been sentenced."

"I understand," said Vauban, reflectively. "You mean that you have not yet appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal to be submitted to the parody of a trial, as I was yesterday. Why, the wretches condemned me without regard to evidence. It was monstrous! Fiendish!"

At that instant two jailers entered the corridor to announce that the hour for exercise had expired. The prisoners returned to their cells, and the two friends were compelled to part. As Vauban was embracing Jean Louvet, perhaps, for the last time, he whispered anxiously:

"Oh, if we could contrive to save this child, my friend!"

They were all three standing at the time, and the little girl was clinging to M. Vauban's coat-tails, as if appealing to him for protection.

"Can you manage to conceal her in your cell?" Jean whispered, eagerly.

"Perhaps."

"Then I'll do my best to save you both."

And, with this parting promise, they separated.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHALK MARKS THAT DISAPPEARED.

On entering the dungeon allotted to him, Jean was surprised that his jailer failed to fasten its door. It is true he closed it after him, but he did not pause to turn the key in the lock.

Had he neglected to lock the doors of the other cells also? If so, it might be possible to visit the one occupied by Vauban, and continue their conversation.

While endeavoring to account for the jailer's negligence, Jean remembered that the fellow was greatly under the influence of liquor, when he came into the corridor, and in no condition to perform his duties properly. This was not to be wondered at, considering that he was brought into daily contact with those who were on their way to death, but was rather an evidence that he was not altogether without some human sympathy.

Approaching his cell door, Jean opened it cautiously a few inches, and peered through the crack. He observed two jailers, conversing together, at one end of the corridor; but they were too far distant for him to hear what they said.

All the doors on the opposite side were tightly closed, and, as they were in charge of the drunken

jailer's comrade, were probably locked also. The doors on his side he was unable to see. He knew that M. Vauban occupied the third cell to the right, and reasoned that it would not be very difficult to reach it, if he should select a time when the jailers were not looking his way. So he kept his eye constantly glued to the crack to watch for such an opportunity.

While he was thus occupied, they left their position; and, still continuing their conversation, slowly approached him. As they drew near, he observed that both were intoxicated. Nearer and nearer they came, until they were almost opposite his cell, when they paused in their walk to argue, after the fashion of drunkards.

"Be as stubborn as you like," said the jailer, who had charge of the cells opposite; "but I insist that every mother's son of them will be sent to the guillotine to-day."

To this Louvet's jailer replied, in a voice thick from drink:

"It's not me that's stubborn, my man, but you. D'ye mean to tell me that there's tumbrils enough to cart off so many?"

"They'll cart off what they can, and come back for the rest," was the obstinate reply.

"Something never heard of since I've been in charge here. So you may believe me, when I tell you that some heads will be spared till to-morrow."

"But who's to decide which shall stay behind?"

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed Louvet's jailer,

in tones of contempt. "Why, how do they decide in the other prisons?"

"I confess I don't know. Can you tell me?"

"To be sure I can, you blockhead. The chief jailer decides, who shall go, and who shall remain, and makes out a list of the former. Then he takes a peep at the jail register; finds out the numbers of the cells they occupy; writes them down opposite their names; and hands the list to an understrapper—say you, or me, for instance. With this list in his hand, the understrapper goes from door to door, with a piece of chalk.

"Say the first number on his list is five, for instance. He knows that the name following it is that of a prisoner condemned to die. So he marks a cross on the door with his chalk, and passes on to the next number on the list. He makes a cross on this door also, and then passes on to the next, and next, until he has chalked every cell whose number is on the list."

"And what happens after?"

"Why, he goes about his business, and meddles no more in the matter. But, along in the afternoon, the tumbrils come rumbling up, and then a second jailer comes round, and examines each door for the chalk mark. Where he finds one, the inmate of that cell must go off with him; the others he leaves alone."

While listening to this dialogue, Jean Louvet's heart beat high with hope; for, if the jailer spoke the truth, there was a chance yet for M. Vauban. It was possible that he might be among those reserved for execution on the morrow, and thus an entire day

would be gained. In the meantime, the *coup d'etat* he had planned might possibly succeed, and Robespierre's enemies be released from the prisons.

Indeed, if such a fortunate event should happen, he knew that he himself would be among the first rescued; for he had informed the Thermidorians whither he was going.

But would the *coup d'etat* succeed? Would Robespierre's downfall be accomplished? Or, even if these things came to pass, would M. Vauban be spared until the morrow?

These questions filled him with the gravest anxiety.

Creeping back into his cell, he sat down on the edge of his cot; and, burying his face in his hands, gave way to gloomy forebodings.

He had entered on this game of politics for the sake of the woman he loved. He had played daringly, desperately, against the most tremendous odds. Yet, notwithstanding the political storm he had succeeded in raising against Robespierre, the possibility of his winning appeared inconceivable.

As the game stood at present, the chances were decidedly against him. To win, he must first of all, save M. Vauban; yet Vauban was on the road to death. Again, he must destroy the tyrant, Robespierre; yet he doubted the ability of the Convention to do so.

Lastly—and this thought was the most terrible—the lovely woman, for whose sake he was staking his all, was at that moment in prison, with the apparition of the guillotine overshadowing her.

Ever since he had engaged in this struggle, he had become hourly more deeply in love with her. If he had before worshipped her at a distance, he now adored her with all the passion of his nature. To return to her defeated was impossible; so he had resolved to link his fate irrevocably with hers.

If he could save his beloved and her father, he would live; otherwise he would perish with them. So, after making his last desperate effort for their salvation, he had voluntarily united himself with their destiny.

Suddenly the door of his cell was flung open, and his jailer commanded him to come forth. He obeyed mechanically.

"Is it not rather early?" he asked, as he stepped out into the corridor.

"Early for what?" growled the jailer, stupefied with drink.

"For the prisoners to be taken to the guillotine."

"Humph! I didn't come here for that purpose, but to put chalk marks on the doors of the condemned. You see there ain't enough tumbrils to carry them all, so some must wait over until to-morrow."

"But why did you call me forth?"

"To go before the Revolutionary Tribunal. They have been told about your capture, and intend to dispose of your case at once."

And the drunken jailer began to consult a paper he held in his hand.

"By the devil's horns and tail!" he mumbled, as his head swayed forward. "I can't make out a single

figure on this cursed list. There's a mist before my eyes, and they all run, helter-skelter, together."

"What is the nature of the list?" asked Jean, with assumed indifference.

"It's the names of the poor devils that must go to St. Guillotine this afternoon."

"Are you putting chalk marks on the doors of their cells?"

"Yes, I mark 'em with a cross," mumbled the jailer.

While this short colloquy was taking place, Louvet looked over the jailer's shoulder upon the slip of paper that trembled in his grasp. All at once his face became deathly pale, and a convulsive gasp escaped him. The besotted jailer raised his glassy eyes to his face, and inquired:

"Why, what ails you, man?"

"Oh, nothing serious," replied Louvet, recovering himself with an effort. "A sudden faintness passed over me, but I feel better now."

"Humph!" and the jailer renewed his examination of the paper.

But what had wrung that agonized gasp from his prisoner?

It was this: While examining the list, over the jailer's shoulder, his eyes had suddenly detected the name of M. Vauban, and the number of the cell he occupied. The horror, that this discovery aroused in him, magnified his vision, so that his friend's name seemed to cover the entire sheet of paper;

"CELL NO. 52—REPRESENTATIVE ALPHONSE VAUBAN."

But, while it magnified his vision, it, at the same time, clarified his intellect. Supreme emergencies often produce this effect on energetic minds.

M. Vauban's cell was, as we already know, but three doors to the right of Louvet's. At any instant, the eyes of the drunkard might clear, and the writing become decipherable to his sight. Then, with a few short steps, and two strokes of the chalk, he would consign M. Vauban to the guillotine.

What was to be done?

There are times in every man's life when the reason acts with the rapidity of lightning. Within the compass of a few seconds, a thousand thoughts and projects flash in succession before the tribunal of the judgment, and are rejected, or accepted, with marvelous intuition.

Presently the man acts, and the world exclaims, "He did the right thing on the spur of the moment," because the quick logic that prompted his performance is inconceivable.

This happened in the case of Jean Louvet. The imminent peril that threatened his friend prompted him to a wondrous activity of thought; and, before two seconds had passed by, he had decided upon a course to pursue.

"My good citizen," he said to the jailer. "I don't wonder that you cannot read the writing; it is so dark here that even the sharpest eyes would be severely

tested. Why don't you go over to that window, where it is lighter?"

"You're right," returned the other, with a maudlin shake of the head. "Why blarst my eyes! your advice is so simple, I must be a blamed idiot not to have thought of it before."

With these words, he staggered toward the end of the corridor, and, holding the paper close to his eyes, was presently absorbed in its contemplation.

While he was so engaged, Jean Louvet tiptoed stealthily to Vauban's cell, and threw the door wide open. As it turned outward on its hinges, this maneuvre left its inside surface exposed. Fortunately the cell doors in the Conciergerie were numbered on both sides; nevertheless, the dark interior of Vauban's chamber was visible, rendering the success of Louvet's stratagem very doubtful.

"What!" exclaimed M. Vauban. "Have the tumbrils arrived so early?"

"Hush!" whispered Louvet, thrusting his head through the open door. "Not a sound, or you are lost!"

Then he stole back to his former position. Scarcely had he reached it, when he heard the jailer's voice cry out, triumphantly:

"Hurrah for the blessed daylight! I'm able to read the writing at last."

And he came staggering up the corridor, muttering —"Cell No. 52—52—52"—as if to impress the figures upon his memory.

Presently he arrived before the door of M. Vauban's

"PUT THE CROSS ON IT FIRST, MY FRIEND," HE SAID PERSUASIVELY, "OR YOU MAY GET YOURSELF IN TROUBLE."—*Page* 225.

cell, and was amazed to find it open. He was about to close it, when Louvet laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Put the cross on it first, my friend," he said, persuasively, "or you may get yourself in trouble."*

The drunken jailer loked up into his face, with bewilderment in his bleared eyes, and, seeing there an expression of apparent solicitude on his behalf, marked a cross upon the door, and slammed it to. Fearful lest he might discover, drunk as he was, that his chalk marks were no longer visible, Louvet hurried him on to the cell of his next victim. After he had gone the rounds of the prison, the young man remarked:

"Don't you think it would be well to lock the doors under your charge? It is apparent that you have forgotten to do so."

The jailer cast upon him a look of maudlin gratitude.

"Why, what a famous good fellow you are!" he exclaimed. "Blast me, if it ain't a shame to send such a man to the guillotine!"

Nevertheless, after repeating the rounds of the prison, and locking the doors he had formerly neglected to secure, he seized this "famous good fellow" by the arm, and hurried him away to the carriage that was in waiting to convey him to the Revolutionary Tribunal.

* Thomas Paine, the author of the "Rights of Man," was a member of the National Convention of the French Republic during the French Revolution. He was arrested and imprisoned in the Luxembourg, where he escaped death upon the guillotine in the exact manner described above.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SOUNDING BOARD CEASES TO RESPOND.

WHILE on his way to trial, Jean Louvet was compelled to pass by the hall of the National Convention. Crowds of people, vainly seeking admittance, were surging round the doors, apparently deaf to the assurances of the gendarmes on duty that the galleries were already overcrowded.

Louvet's eyes sparkled, as he gazed upon the building; for he knew that a tremendous battle was raging within its walls, upon the result of which the fate of France depended. He strained his ears eagerly to catch the sounds of a tumult; but heard nothing indicative of confusion.

Several times, however, when the clamor of the crowd abated, he heard a voice, as harsh as a screech-owl's, protesting querulously to the assembled Representatives.

"It is Robespierre's," he muttered, anxiously; and passed on to appear before his judges.

He was right.

Among the first to enter the Convention Hall, on that memorable morning, was the tyrant, with a throng of his Jacobin friends at his heels. His partisans, forewarned, already packed the galleries, and he

glanced up at them with a smile of triumph, as he walked briskly down the aisle to his seat.

As he had been absent from the meetings for a considerable length of time, his reappearance was greeted with loud cheers.

Settling himself down in his chair, he calmly awaited the arrival of his opponents, confidently expecting to destroy them at a blow. Presently they began to appear, by twos and threes, not gesticulating and chattering as was their wont, but silent and somber, going directly to their appointed places, the moment they entered the hall.

Could they have been informed of his intended denunciation?

With a sidelong glance, he studied the face of Barras. There was an undoubted defiance in its expression. Then he threw a glance in Tallien's direction. His whole attitude was audacious and intrepid. Fréron's countenance was pale and determined; Bourdon's reckless; while Collot d'Herbois frowned gloomily.

At last President Thuriot mounted to his chair on the platform, and formally opened the session.

Awaiting the first lull in the proceedings, Robespierre left his seat, and deliberately mounted into the tribune. It could be seen that his jaundiced face was clouded with an ominous gloom. Pausing for a moment, to cast an imperious glance over the assemblage, he drew a carefully prepared manuscript from his pocket, and began reading from it in a voice boding of death to many of his hearers.

Judge whether his enemies listened with interest.

In accents unmelodious and grating, he sounded the note of warning. He laid stress on the degenerate condition of the republican spirit among his confréres. He accused the Moderates of corruption, and asserted that the Committees were infected. There was backsliding on this hand, and on that. As for himself, he declared, he was ready to die at a moment's warning, should the Republic require his life. But his patriotism and honesty were well known.

Finally, with an outburst of passionate eloquence, he demanded the death of all traitors. It was for their punishment that the guillotine had been established, and to the guillotine it was just that they should go. He poured forth a perfect torrent of denunciations, glancing significantly at his enemies in turn, and concluded by calling upon all honest Representatives to rally round him, and weed out the traitors from their midst.

When he had finished, he cast an expectant glance about, awaiting the applause which had hitherto been accorded to his speeches. For the terrorized Convention had heretofore responded, like a sounding-board, to every utterance that left his lips.

This time, however, the sounding board was silent.

For a moment a stillness as of death reigned. Then a few of his Jacobin friends raised a faint cheer of approbation, which was continued by his partisans in the galleries.

Robespierre descended from the tribune, livid with anger and dismay; and, returning to his seat, glared

defiance at his opponents. At this juncture, Representative Lecointre, fearing the tyrant's vengeance, rose insidiously in his place, and moved that Robespierre's speech should be printed, and sent to the departments, in accordance with established usage.

What could poor Thuriot do but put this motion to a vote?

Alas, for the cowardice of human nature! Confronted with this unexpected dilemma, the Thermidorians were seized with panic; and, joining their voices to the acclamations of Robespierre's friends, voted for the printing of the speech.

This indorsement of the tyrant's policy would have sealed the fate of his enemies, then and there, had there not been among them one brave man to stem the tide of battle. Realizing that he was irrevocably doomed, and that consequently nothing could be lost by a violent self-defense, Representative Cambon sprang to his feet, shouting in tones that shook the hall:

"One single man paralyzes the Convention, and that man is Robespierre."

Inspired by Cambon's audacity, the Thermidorians shook off their terror. In rapid succession, their leaders sprang up and assailed the amazed tyrant with more and more vigorous blows.

A tumult filled the hall.

Aware that the charm of his invincibility was gone, Robespierre cast frightened looks around; and, with the political sagacity that characterized him, saw in an instant the peril of his position. It was not, however, until a second vote on his fatal speech had

been taken, and the resolution to print it rescinded by a large majority, that he fully comprehended the strength of the new party which had sprung up over night to oppose him.

Mute with alarm, he immediately left the Convention, and hastened to his friends in the Club of Jacobins. There, he called a meeting of its most influential members, and read to them the speech which the Convention had repudiated. At its conclusion he raised his hand impressively, and delivered these solemn words:

"Brothers, you have heard my last will and testament. I have seen to-day that the league of villains is so strong, that I cannot hope to escape them. I yield without a murmur! I leave to you my memory; it will be dear to you, and you will defend it."

Then he fell back fainting with exhaustion.

Immediately, the building resounded with thunders of applause, and vows of sanguinary vengeance. Many were affected even to tears, and, crowding round their leader, conjured him, with the most urgent entreaties, to arouse the people to insurrection. Henriot, the Commander of the National Guards, declared his readiness to march his troops against the Convention.

These evidences of support roused fresh courage in the trembling tyrant. Knowing that death was the inevitable doom of the defeated party in the political battle then raging, he was persuaded to accept Henriot's offer, saying:

"Well, then, let us separate the wicked from the

weak! Free the Convention from those who oppress it! Advance and save the country! If, in these generous efforts we fail, my friends, you shall see me drink hemlock calmly."

The enthusiasm evoked by these hypocritical words was tremendous.

David, the famous painter, sprang forward and grasped his hand, exclaiming:

"Robespierre, if you drink hemlock, I will drink it with you!"

"We will all drink hemlock!" cried a multitude of voices. "To die with Robespierre is to die with the people!"

François the Idler was a witness of this scene. He was a witness also of a violent incident that succeeded it.

Several Thermidorians, having followed Robespierre to the Jacobin Club, were recognized and denounced by Couthon. Immediately, a number of violent Jacobins fell upon them furiously, and drove them from the club house, wounded and half stripped of their garments.

This exhibition of rage produced a curious effect upon Robespierre. It determined him on a change in his plans. Before its occurrence, he had consented to an insurrection of the people on his behalf; after it, he positively refused to countenance means so lawless and desperate.

His retraction, however, was probably prompted by confidence, rather than virtue; for he now firmly be-

lieved in his ability to triumph in the Convention on the following day.

François the Idler, as has been said, was a witness of these dramatic scenes, and, fully conscious of their ominous significance, hurried off to warn the Thermidorians of their peril.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LOST BEYOND HOPE.

JEAN LOUVET'S trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal was a mockery from beginning to end. He knew that it would be so, and went through it with scornful indifference.

He made no efforts at defense, merely replying to the questions asked him. Within ten minutes from the opening of his case, he was adjudged guilty of treason, and sentenced to the guillotine.

On his return to the Conciergerie, he was received by his jailer, who displayed a friendly interest in his fate.

"I know what your return here means," he said, with a hiccough, "and I'm sorry that your trial turned out so. You did me a good turn this morning, and I'll not forget it. Those unlocked cells might have cost me my job. So, if I can do anything to make you comfortable while you stop here, why just let me know."

"Thank you," returned Louvet. "If you are really desirous of serving me, I can suggest a way. Events of the greatest importance to the Republic are taking place in Paris, and I am anxious to know what is

going on. If you will find out, from time to time, and bring me word, I will repay you amply."

The jailer agreed to this readily.

"Do you know, citizen," he added, as he conducted Louvet to his cell, "that a very strange thing happened during your absence?"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, the strangest thing that was ever heard of; but perhaps you can explain it. You remember what trouble I had to read the list of the condemned this morning, and how the cell numbers all ran together on the paper? Well, at your advice, I went over to the window, where the light was better, and made out that the next cell I was to put a cross on was No. 52."

"Yes," answered Louvet, trembling with apprehension, "and I saw you mark the door of that cell with my own eyes."

"Of course you did!" exclaimed the jailer, "and you saw me close the door as well. You also helped me lock every door under my care, I'll swear to that!"

Louvet's heart sickened with dread.

"Go on!" he muttered faintly.

"Well, according to my list, the prisoner in No. 52 was Representative Alphonse Vauban. So you can understand my surprise, when I tell you what happened. While you were away to be tried, the tumbrils arrived to cart off the condemned to the guillotine. The chief jailer visited the cells himself, opened all those I had marked with a cross, and called upon the inmates to come forth to be executed. After the tumbrils had departed, I made my usual round of the cells,

with water for the prisoners, and came presently to No. 52."

He hesitated, looking up into Jean's face with a puzzled expression.

By this time they had reached the door of Vauban's cell.

"Well, what next?" asked Louvet, tremulously.

Pointing to the closed door of cell No. 52, the jailer replied, in a superstitious whisper:

"The cross marks had disappeared, and the prisoner was within. Look for yourself!"

Tears of joy sparkled in Jean Louvet's eyes; for he now knew that his stratagem had succeeded.

Just then the murmur of voices in conversation issued through the grating. One was the light treble of a child; the other the deep, rich bass of a man. They informed him that he had saved the little girl as well as Vauban. A moment afterward, Louvet was locked securely in his own narrow chamber, and left to meditate upon his fast approaching doom.

About five in the afternoon, the friendly jailer, whose name was Billaud, peered through the grating of the door and whispered hoarsely:

"I've news for you, citizen."

Advancing with alacrity, Jean reached the grief-hole, and pressed his face close against the iron bars.

"I am listening," he muttered anxiously. "You may proceed."

"There's been the wildest excitement in the Convention to-day," said Billaud, in nervous undertones. "Robespierre denounced his enemies in a great speech,

and they raised such an uproar against him, that he left the hall in a rage. It appears that a strong party has been organized to ruin him; but he'll triumph in spite of their efforts."

His last words were uttered so confidently that Louvet was greatly alarmed.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"That the great Robespierre is now repeating his speech before the Jacobin Club, and its members are applauding him to a man."

"Then Robespierre was not accused and arrested by the Convention's order?"

"No; and he is now mustering his friends about him to defeat his enemies to-morrow morning. As he has the National Guards, the gendarmes, and the people at his back, he is sure to come out on top in the struggle."

Louvet uttered a despairing groan; for he knew that his friends were now lost beyond all hope. The jailer having departed—for to linger longer would have been perilous—he staggered back into his cell and flung himself prone upon his pallet.

"Lost! Lost!" he moaned, in anguish. "Of what avail was my stratagem to delay M. Vauban's execution until to-morrow? To repeat it will be impossible. To-morrow he will be murdered upon the guillotine, even should Robespierre's enemies triumph. They have lost a day by their cowardly indecision, and that will prove fatal to my friends. Oh, Louise, my own beloved! I fear you, also, must perish. Can it be pos-

sible there is a God in Heaven to permit such things to come to pass?"

So excessive was his grief, that it deprived him of all consciousness, and he lay face downward on his couch like one devoid of life.

At six o'clock in the evening, he was roused to partake of supper. He forced himself to eat the coarse fare provided, as he was resolved to retain his strength until the last.

At seven o'clock, the door of his cell was unlocked, and he was informed that the hour for evening exercise had arrived. As this would afford him an opportunity to converse again with M. Vauban, he determined to avail himself of it.

So, hastening into the corridor, he mingled once more with the condemned prisoners, until he beheld his friend, pacing to and fro at the end of the gallery, holding the little girl by the hand.

"Good evening, Citizen Louvet!" exclaimed M. Vauban, cheerily. "Have you appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal as yet?"

"I have," was the gloomy response, "and was sentenced to death without a hearing. So we may ride together to the Place de la Revolution to-morrow."

"Do you mean that the *coup d'etat* you spoke of this morning has failed, and that Robespierre still tyrannizes over the nation?"

"It grieves me to answer, yes," returned Louvet, bowing his head dejectedly. "Even if he should be dethroned to-morrow, I fear it would be too late for our salvation."

"Take heart, my noble friend," returned Vauban, gently. "I assure you that I do not fear to die. There is but one regret I have," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper. "I would suffer any torture if I could save this little child."

While speaking he laid his hand tenderly upon the little one's head, and glanced down upon her with fatherly affection. Louvet was on the point of telling him that it would be more consistent to save his sympathies for his own daughter, who was at that moment a prisoner in the Luxembourg, awaiting the death sentence, when a glance at his friend's benevolent countenance restrained him.

M. Vauban was unaware as yet of the fate that had befallen Louise, and it would be an act of unnecessary cruelty to inform him.

"On what charge was this child condemned?" inquired Jean, after a pause.

"Her parents were unfortunately aristocrats," replied M. Vauban.

Jean was about to press his inquiries further, when a commotion at the other end of the corridor attracted his attention. There was a door there, opening upon a flight of steps that led down to the cells of the condemned. Beyond it was a narrow hall, communicating with the prison offices, and with the apartments of the chief jailer and his underlings.

This door had just been opened to admit a number of new arrivals from the other prisons, who had been condemned and sentenced by the Revolutionary Tribunal that day. One by one, they slowly descended

into the corridor, and joined those who had preceded them on their fatal journey.

"It is evident that the tumbrils have come from the Court of the Tribunal," said M. Vauban, casting a pitying glance upon the unhappy wretches. "Poor unfortunates, how my heart aches for them!"

Suddenly he started back with an agonized cry.

"Oh, mercy, dear God! Mercy!"

Turning quickly toward him, Louvet saw that his eyes were starting from their sockets, and that every muscle of his ashen face quivered with mortal anguish.

Following the direction of his fixed gaze, Jean beheld an apparition that completely deprived him of the use of his faculties. A terrible groan welled up from the depths of his breaking heart, and, staring vacantly toward the door of the corridor, he tottered back against the wall for support.

At that instant, a bell clanged somewhere in the building, announcing that the period of exercise had expired.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NINTH OF THERMIDOR.

THE night intervening between the eighth and ninth of Thermidor was one of the most intense anxiety in Paris. The stormy scenes in the Convention, during its session of the day before, had reached the ears of every citizen, and the clubs, cafés and wine-shops were thronged to their utmost capacity.

Excited groups occupied every corner, discussing the probable result of Robespierre second battle with the Convention. In the Faubourg St. Antoine, there was a rising of the people, instigated by the tyrant's partisans. His friends, too, were active in concerting insurrections in other quarters of the city, with the idea of mobbing the Convention on the morrow, in the event of their leader's defeat by the members of that body.

Nor were the despot's enemies inactive. Tallien, Barras, Fréron, and their adherents slept not. A corps of messengers and agents, some on horseback, others on foot, were kept busy until daylight, bringing them intelligence of the transactions at the Club of Jacobins, and of the increasing tumult of the people.

Apprised of their danger, they made vigorous preparations for the defense of the Convention Hall

against the rabble, and their own protection during the session.

It was unanimously resolved that, should Robespierre attempt to mount the tribune, he must be denounced by internal tumult, and not permitted to speak. The Thermidorians were to rise from their seats in a body and cry him down. Then Tallien, as the most audacious and eloquent of their leaders, was to force his way into the tribune, in Robespierre's place, and call for his accusation and arrest.

Barras was intrusted with the military defense, to prevent the rabble from interfering with these proceedings. Thus each party, not knowing the strength of the other, made every possible preparation for the morrow, and was sanguine of success.

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While the chief actors in the approaching drama were so engaged, three humble citizens were sitting round a table in a small wine-shop, situated in the Faubourg St. Antoine, conversing, with their heads close together, after the approved manner of conspirators. The room they occupied was a small, square chamber, reserved for the use of private customers, who did not wish to be disturbed while sipping their wine. Nevertheless, there was a possibility that an eavesdropper might be lurking around, so they conferred in whispers.

"I should positively die of shame," said one, "if we should allow the Chief to perish without lifting a hand

to save him. That is why I asked you to meet me here."

"You are no more anxious on his behalf than I am, André," returned a stockily-built man at his left.

"Nor than I," chimed in the fashionably attired lounger, sitting at his right.

"Well, then," returned the first speaker, "let us see what means André the Barber, Simon the Jailer, and François the Idler can devise for his rescue."

"What have you to suggest?" asked Simon.

André the Barber shook his head hopelessly.

"If I could only gain an audience with Robespierre," he said, "I think I could persuade him to delay the execution. He really believes me one of the truest friends he has, and might spare the Chief as a personal favor to me."

"I doubt it," returned Simon, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"Then suggest something better if you can."

Simon the Jailer now looked despairingly at François.

"Can't you come to our aid, comrade?" he asked.

The young man appealed to, leaned farther over the table, and answered, drawlingly:

"It is useless for André to seek an interview with Robespierre, for he is far too anxious about his own head just now to think of saving the head of another. Therefore, we will eliminate André's suggestion from consideration. As for you, Simon," he continued, "you acknowledge that you have no suggestion to

offer. Therefore, it remains with me to propose a plot for your acceptance."

Pausing a moment to enjoy the discomfiture of his comrades, he resumed:

"There is only one possible way of saving our dear Chief from the guillotine, and even that may fail."

Here he bent still nearer to his companions; lowered his voice to a whisper; and assumed such an air of mystery, that even the ubiquitous novelist, who is supposed to penetrate with an infallible intuition into the most secret plots and motives of his characters, in this case must confess to failure.

That François' scheme was a clever one, however, was apparent from the behavior of his listeners.

"A capital idea!" exclaimed André, hopefully. "You can trust me to play my part in it."

"And you can count on me also," chimed in Simon, his face glowing with enthusiasm. "There's no mistake about it, François, you are a young man of positive genius."

At this point their conference ended, and they hurried out of the wine-shop.

Scarcely had they reached the sidewalk, when a clock in the neighborhood struck midnight.

"The ninth of Thermidor has begun!" exclaimed François, in solemn tones.

"A day destined to be one of the most memorable in history," added André, with prophetic gravity.

And, embracing one another fervently, the three friends separated.

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When the sun soared above the roofs and steeples of Paris, on the day called, according to republican chronology, the ninth of Thermidor, but which the civilized world in general designated, the 27th of July, 1794, Robespierre arose from the bed, where he had thrown himself to rest, rather than to sleep, and attired himself with his usual scrupulous care.

For was he not to gain a signal triumph over his enemies before nightfall?

It was evident that he thought so; for his eyes twinkled wickedly, and a smile of grim determination settled about the corners of his harsh mouth.

"I was taken by surprise yesterday," he reflected, pacing his bedchamber, while waiting for his breakfast; "consequently my enemies gained a temporary advantage over me. To-day, however, I am prepared, and will crush them. Ungrateful wretches! Have they forgotten all I have sacrificed to the cause of liberty?"

His eyes blazed with fanaticism as he continued:

"It rests with thee, Maximilian Robespierre, to rescue France from her enemies, for thou alone art incorruptible. Thy destiny and that of the Republic are one. Victory for thee to-day, means the triumph of liberty; defeat, the downfall of the Republic."

When Robespierre entered the Convention Hall, later in the morning, silence reigned throughout the crowded house. Every eye was turned upon him, as he walked quickly to his seat, casting scornful, triumphant glances upon his enemies.

The galleries were packed to suffocation; for all

Paris knew that life, or death, was involved in the issue of the political struggle about to begin.

In one corner of the upper gallery, sat Jacques the Blacksmith, his huge arms resting upon the railing, and his ferocious face supported between his great hands. At his side, sat François the Idler, whispering to him earnestly at intervals; and, forming an attentive group around these two, were some twenty red-capped denizens of St. Antoine, the members of a political club of which the blacksmith was the leader.

"I have brought you here, Citizen Jacques," whispered François, "to let you judge for yourself whether this Maximilian Robespierre is, or is not, determined to tyrannize as a despot over the Republic. The Convention, which, as you know, is composed of Representatives of the people, will force him to show his hand to-day, and you can then see how he has been deceiving honest patriots like ourselves."

Jacques the Blacksmith, who had already been somewhat shaken in his confidence in Robespierre by François' arguments, nodded his head doubtfully, and muttered:

"We shall see."

At that moment a commotion on the floor of the house indicated that the hour for commencing the tremendous drama had arrived.

St. Just, on behalf of Robespierre, began the onset.

A scene of tumult immediately ensued of which no adequate description can be given. As narrated in the *Moniteur*, of the 11th of Thermidor, it stands out as one of the most exciting episodes in history.

The Thermidorians rose in a body and filled the hall with their wild cries. St. Just, confused by the clamor, paused at the steps of the tribune, undecided what course to pursue. Seeing at a glance that his friends were far outnumbered by his foes, Robespierre was overwhelmed with despair.

Pale and agitated he attempted to ascend the tribune.

But Tallien was too quick for him. Rushing forward with blazing eyes, he laid rude hands on the despot's person, and dragged him forcibly away. This audacious act inspired the Thermidorians with enthusiasm.

"Down with the tyrant!"

The great hall trembled to this cry.

While the uproar was at its height, Tallien, mounting the tribune from which he had just ejected Robespierre, raised his hand to command a hearing. Suddenly the mad cries of his partisans ceased. Then their bold leader, with a dramatic, impassioned gesture, addressed them in words instinct with warning.

"Just now," he began, with a threatening glance at Robespierre, "I determined that the curtain should be withdrawn. It is done. The conspirators are unmasked, and liberty shall triumph. Up to this moment, I had preserved utter silence, because I was aware that the tyrant had made a list of proscriptions. But I was present at the sitting of the Jacobins last night, and heard utterances that made me tremble for the existence of the Republic. I beheld the formation of the army of this second Cromwell, and resolved that,

if the Convention dared not strike the tyrant, then I, myself, would dare."

He paused, drew a glittering dagger from his waistband, and, pointing it menacingly at the breast of Robespiere, cried out in tragic accents:

"And with this poniard will I pierce his heart, if the Convention has not the courage to order his immediate arrest."

At the same time he moved the arrest of Henriot and other leading partisans of the despot.

The motion was tumultuously carried.

In vain did Robespierre attempt to gain a hearing. Cries of "Down with the tyrant" filled the house, and menaces, reproaches and insults were heaped upon him without measure.

Pale with terror, he turned to President Thuriot, crying out hoarsely:

"President of assassins, will you hear me?"

But his voice was drowned in the overwhelming clamor of his enemies. The motion for his arrest having been carried with thunders of applause, his brother, Augustin Robespierre, a young man universally esteemed for his many virtues, sprang forward to his side, shouting:

"I am as guilty as my brother. As I have striven to share his virtues, I demand to share his fate."

This act of generosity aroused a responsive feeling in the fallen man, who instantly cried out:

"Attention, citizens! As I have, perhaps, deserved your hatred, I accept your condemnation. But whether

it be crime, or virtue, which you strike in me, my brother is not guilty."

Nevertheless, Augustin Robespierre was condemned to arrest. In quick succession, Couthon, St. Just, Lebas and others were also decreed to the same fate, and the triumph of the Thermidorians was complete.

As cries of "*Vive la République!*" arose on all sides, Robespierre quietly folded his arms, and, with a contemptuous sneer on his lips, exclaimed:

"The Republic? It is destroyed, for scoundrels triumph!"

At that instant the clock in the Convention Hall struck three.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TOO LATE.

WHAT was the apparition which evoked that agonized cry from M. Vauban, and produced such a terrible effect upon Jean Louvet?

It was the sudden appearance of Louise and the maid, Marie, in the doorway at which they were gazing.

With the stately bearing of a queen, she descended the steps leading down into that house of death. Her dark eyes expressed the utmost tranquillity, and a serene smile dimpled the corners of her lovely mouth. To the despairing creatures who witnessed her entrance, she appeared like one of God's angels sent to console them in their last hours of misery.

Just as she reached the foot of the steps, the bell, announcing that the brief period for exercise had expired, sounded its warning, and she was immediately locked up in the cell allotted to her. Thus her friends were deprived of an opportunity to communicate with her, and she was left in ignorance of their presence in the prison.

That night was a frightful one for Jean Louvet. He paced his narrow quarters continuously, wringing his hands, and moaning, like a lost soul. It seemed,

at times, that his reason would become completely overthrown, so terrible were his grief and despair.

As for poor Vauban, he wailed piteously through most of the night, and, toward morning, sank into a stupor in which he remained, until aroused by his jailer for breakfast. The child he had taken under his protection, amazed at his sudden collapse, sat by his side in silence, until sleep relieved her of her vigils.

At last the hour for morning exercise arrived.

Jean Louvet was the first to appear. Having been informed by the friendly jailer of the situation of Louise's cell, he hastened thither, with breathless speed, to prepare her for the approaching interview with her father. He met her as she was coming through the narrow door.

"Can it be possible, M. Louvet, that you are here?" she cried, endeavoring to control her emotion.

"Yes, mademoiselle," returned Louvet, with a desperate effort to appear calm. "You remember the word I sent you, do you not?"

"Do you refer to your last message?" she inquired, with trembling lips.

Louvet bowed his head in assent; for he had not the courage to speak his thoughts.

"Then the worst has befallen my poor father," she moaned, staggering against the doorpost for support.

The words that followed seemed to be addressed to herself, rather than to Louvet.

"Do I remember the message of this dear friend? Alas, yes; for it is engraved upon my heart. 'If failure

should be the result of my plans,' he said, 'I will perish with those whom I have struggled to rescue.'"

A period of silence followed, during which Louise seemed to struggle with her emotions. Then, raising her eyes to Jean's anxious face, she resumed composedly:

"I understand what your presence here means, my dear friend. It signifies that you have failed to save my father. You have made a heroic fight, and I thank you from the depths of my heart. But why did you decide so rashly to perish with the friends you tried to rescue?"

"Because I love them," was the impassioned answer.

Louise replied to this expression of genuine feeling with a glance of infinite tenderness.

"When did my father go to his martyrdom?" she asked timidly, after a pause.

Louvet's face brightened.

"He has not perished as yet!" he exclaimed, triumphantly; "for I succeeded in delaying his execution for a day. He is now in this prison, and you will meet him presently."

"You saved him for this meeting with me?" murmured Louise, in tones that thrilled Louvet to the heart. "Oh, how noble and considerate you are!"

At that instant, the girl caught sight of her father, as he emerged dejectedly from his cell, leading his little companion by the hand, and sprang forward to his side.

"Oh, my dear, good father!" she exclaimed, clasping him tenderly in her arms. "Did you think your

little Louise had deserted you? Oh, no, she is incapable of such cruelty! Look at me, darling! See, it is your own little daughter, who has come here to share your fate!"

While giving utterance to these endearments, she rained kisses upon his poor old face. Then, suddenly changing her tone to one of encouragement, she resumed:

"Oh, what a glorious thing it is, dear father, that we are permitted to perish together! Let us show our enemies how bravely we can meet our fate. The Vaubans were never cowards, father."

Jean Louvet, who had followed her across the corridor, was entranced with the heroism she displayed. Indeed, there was something so magnetic in her utterances that the hearts of all present were inspired with enthusiasm, and even M. Vauban was reanimated with new courage.

During the hour that ensued, the Vaubans and Jean Louvet conversed happily together, without once mentioning their fast approaching doom. As if by tacit agreement, this theme was carefully avoided, although the future world and kindred subjects were discoursed of freely. In fact, it was one of those rare occasions, when soul is revealed to soul, and speech becomes spiritualized and sublime.

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On the afternoon of the ninth of Thermidor, an unusual delay occurred in the arrival at the Con-

ciergerie of the tumbrils. They generally made their appearance at two o'clock; but on the day of Robespierre's downfall, were strangely dilatory.

When the customary hour passed, and still they did not come, the despairing victims in the prison began to hope. As minute after minute sped on, without their being summoned to come forth to death, this hope grew stronger in their breasts.

Suddenly the great clock in the corridor struck three.

While the air still vibrated with the sound of its last stroke, a faint noise was heard in the street outside. Then a universal groan arose from every cell, and despair resumed its sway in every heart. For there was no mistaking the significance of that low, continuous noise.

It was the rumbling of heavy cartwheels over the pavement.

At last the sounds suddenly ceased, just opposite the entrance to the prison, and a period of silence followed. It was broken, shortly afterward, by the tread of footsteps approaching the door, which presently opened, and the chief jailer descended into the corridor. He was followed by two underlings, with great bunches of keys dangling from their waistbands.

"There's room in the carts for all to-day," he announced, with an imperious gesture.

Then, turning on his heel, he added with a brutal laugh, "St. Guillotine will be pleased with our generous offering."

When the door had closed after him, the turnkeys made the rounds, opening cell after cell as they proceeded, and calling upon the prisoners to come forth.

In a few minutes the condemned were all standing in the corridor, huddled together in little groups, according to the friendships they had formed during their short stay in the prison. M. Vauban, Louise, Marie, Jean Louvet and the little girl constituted one of these small bands. They were wondering whether they would be allowed to ride in the same tumbril, when the friendly jailer approached them and mumbled cautiously:

"If you'd like to remain in each other's company until the last, I think I can manage to arrange it."

"Thank you," said Jean, gratefully. "I wish it were in my power to reward you for your kindness, but I am unable to do so at present. However," he added, handing the jailer a valuable ring, "there is a trifle on which you should raise at least a thousand francs."

The keeper took the offering in open-mouthed astonishment, and slipped it slyly into his pocket.

At that moment the chief jailer appeared, and beckoned the prisoners to come forward. They followed him through a long hall into a large, dark room, where they again fell into groups, awaiting the final summons to go forth to execution.

When this time at last arrived, the jailer was as good as his word. Approaching Louvet hastily, he whispered:

"Keep close to your friends and follow me!"

Then, elbowing his way quickly through the crowd, he led them through the prison entrance to the street, and hurried them into the nearest tumbril. A number of other prisoners took places beside them, and, with a crack of his whip, the driver started on the fatal journey, escorted by mounted guards on the right and left.

The remaining tumbrils were soon filled with victims, and formed in procession behind. As they jolted slowly over the pavements, crowds walked beside them, howling execrations at their occupants, and waving hats, sticks and clenched fists in the air.

At this time the guillotine was situated in the Place de la Revolution, a considerable distance from the Conciergerie, and it was customary to change the route of the death carts at frequent intervals. The way chosen on this fateful occasion led across the Place du Carrousel, and, as they drew within sight of it, a terrible uproar reached their ears.

"It is as I feared," muttered Louvet, rising in his place and looking toward the scene of commotion. "Robespierre has incited an insurrection in order to crush his opponents in the Convention."

He remained gazing upon the approaching mob, until the tumbrils entered the Place du Carrousel, and passed several carts going in an opposite direction.

Then he uttered an agonized cry and sank back, limp and powerless.

"What ails you, dear friend?" asked Louise, anxiously.

Louvet pointed to a figure in one of the passing carts.

"Look well at that man!" he groaned faintly. "'Tis Robespierre, and he is on his way to prison. I have accomplished his downfall. I have won the game. But, alas, too late! Too late!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

WITHIN SIGHT OF THE GUILLOTINE.

Louise glanced in the direction indicated, and saw that Louvet had indeed spoken the truth.

In the foremost death-cart, stood the great Robespierre, his hands tied together behind his back and his face bent downward, in an attitude of complete abandonment to despair. On one side, he was supported by his brother, Augustin, on the other, by a gendarme.

St. Just, Couthon, Lebas and many other of his most active partisans occupied the carts that followed. They were manacled, guarded by gendarmes, and were pale with fright. A strong escort of mounted guards rode, two by two, on both sides of the carts, to protect the prisoners from the fury of the populace, who crowded in upon them, shouting madly:

"*Vive la République!* Death to the tyrant!"

What a swift and awful retribution!

At sunrise, an absolute dictator; ere nightfall, a condemned outlaw. In the morning, the idol of the people; in the afternoon, the object of their vengeance. Feared and despised; beloved and hated; omnipotent and helpless; from the pinnacle of greatness to the gutter of contempt—and all within the compass of a day.

To find its parallel, one must turn from human history to Divine, and contemplate the downfall of proud Lucifer.

"Oh, how deeply I pity him!" sighed Louise, gazing upon the fallen tyrant with infinite compassion.

Did he hear her?

Or was there an occult attraction in her starry eyes which compelled him to look up?

Certain it is that, while the carts were passing, Robespierre uplifted his face suddenly, and their glances met.*

A flash of recognition; a second flash, eloquent in meaning, passed between them; then the man instantly shifted his gaze toward the Conciergerie; while the woman turned her's heroically toward the Place de la Revolution.

What messages had they communicated to one another in that momentary glance?

From Robespierre, an agonized cry of shame, remorse and black despair.

From Louise, a mute assurance of pity, sympathy and pardon.

In the meantime, the people, who were accompanying the tumbrils to the place of execution, now turned in their tracks, and joined the howling mob that were following Robespierre to the Luxembourg; at which

* In Abbott's History of the French Revolution, it is related that, while Robespierre was on his way to the Luxembourg, he passed a number of tumbrils conveying victims to the place of execution.

the stalwart driver, in charge of Louvet's tumbril, chuckled with satisfaction and muttered:

"Nothing could have happened more fortunately."

As the tumbrils were leaving the Place du Carrousel, the maid, Marie, who had hitherto borne up bravely, began to tremble and weep; whereupon Louise placed her arm lovingly around her, and kissing the tears from her white face, said consolingly:

"Courage, my dear sister! If you love me, you would not wish to abandon me; but would rather rejoice to share my fate."

"Ah, mademoiselle," replied Marie, dejectedly, "you are a great and noble lady, while I am but a poor and humble maid."

"Nevertheless, we are devoted sisters."

And Louise again embraced her faithful maid.

She next turned with a radiant smile toward her father, who had fully regained his courage and lofty bearing, and was endeavoring to console the little girl beside him.

"My dear, brave father!" she exclaimed, in tones of affection. "But a momentary parting, and then an eternity of bliss together—is it not so?"

M. Vauban answered serenely:

"It is true, my darling child!"

By this time the tumbrils were proceeding slowly toward a boulevard which led directly to the Place de la Revolution, and as they rumbled over the pavement, the people who lived in the houses along the way, emerged from their doors, and followed after them.

Thus a second mob was gradually formed to accompany them to the scene of death.

Having consoled and encouraged her maid and beloved father, Louise glanced timidly toward Jean Louvet. Noticing an expression of profound dejection upon his resolute face, she drew near, and placed a hand gently upon his arm, saying:

"Do not give away to despair, Jean, for I'm sure everything has happened for the best."

It was the first time she had called him by his baptismal name, and it produced a marvelous effect upon his spirits.

"God bless you, Mademoiselle Louise!" he replied softly. "You have made me very, very happy."

"Do you really mean that?" she asked eagerly.

"I do, and from the depths of my heart, mademoiselle!"

"Tell me how I have made you happy, Jean?"

There was a slight tremor in Louvet's voice, as he answered faintly:

"You have blessed me with your friendship. You have forgiven my failure to save you, and, furthermore, you have graciously permitted me to die with you, Mademoiselle Vauban."

She took both his hands in hers, and looked straight into his eyes.

"My dear Jean," she said, "do you think that is quite fair?"

He returned her gaze with a perplexed look.

"I do not understand you," he answered.

"Ah, I see I must explain," she said with an angelic

smile. "I mean, dearest Jean, that we have become such perfect friends, that all formality should cease between us. You are no longer Monsieur Louvet to me, but my beloved brother, Jean, and it grieves me to have you still address me as mademoiselle."

"You are very kind, my friend," was the young man's tremulous response; "but I dare not trust myself to address you so familiarly. You might guess a sacred secret that I am endeavoring to hide for your sake. For I would not embitter your last moments by betraying it."

While he was uttering these words, the tumbril turned into the boulevard and the Place de la Revolution appeared in view. At the same instant the girl raised her eyes and shuddered.

For the gaunt frame of the guillotine loomed darkly before her.

"Oh, Jean, my beloved Jean!" she cried, suddenly throwing off all maidenly restraint. "Can it be possible that you do not love me after all? Look, yonder stands the guillotine! In a few moments we must be parted forever. Can you die without showing me your heart?"

Still holding his hands, she pressed them close to her throbbing bosom, exclaiming passionately:

"Oh, God, how I love this man!"

Unmindful of the taunting crowd that surged round the death carts; regardless of the spectators in the houses; of his fellow prisoners; and of the watchful guards who rode beside them, Jean Louvet clasped her yielding form close to his heart, and whispered in tones of indescribable tenderness:

"Louise! My beloved!"

An ineffable smile, accompanied by a sigh of infinite contentment, was her only answer to his words.

For a brief moment, the crowd; the tumbrils; the guards; the curious faces looking down from the windows of the houses; even the terrible guillotine, which they were fast approaching, disappeared from their consciousness, like the phantasms of a dream, and they lived in an elysium of happiness.

From this blissful state, the young man was the first to awaken; for his eyes, chancing to wander for a moment to the shouting people, recognized the ferocious countenance of Jacques the Blacksmith, grinning up at him with an expression of savage delight. Then he instantly remembered the terrible fate toward which his beloved was hastening, and cried out in anguish:

"Oh, why can I not die for us both?"

"Because it is far sweeter to perish together, dear Jean," answered Louise, in a gentle whisper.

Then, looking into his eyes with passionate intensity, as if she would penetrate the deepest secrets of his soul, she asked suddenly:

"Tell me, my own, true Jean!—Do you believe in a merciful God?"

"With the implicit faith of a child," he answered.

"Then I do not fear to die; for we can love each other through countless ages," she sighed contentedly.

And Louvet whispered gently:

"Through all eternity."

At that instant a deep voice in the crowd shouted fiercely:

"Make way there! Stand aside, or we'll split ye like pullets with our pikes!"

Glancing quickly over his shoulder, Louvet beheld a sight that filled him with alarm. Jacques the Blacksmith at the head of a mob of red-capped citizens armed with pikes, clubs and axes, was clearing a way through the throng toward the entrance of a narrow street that led from the boulevard toward the Faubourg St. Antoine.

A moment afterward, two masked men sprang out of the crowd, and, seizing the bridles of the horses ridden by the nearest guardsmen, leveled pistols at the soldiers, bawling:

"Turn aside as you value your lives!"

As if these bold manœuvres were not sufficient to arouse astonishment, the driver of their tumbril turned suddenly to the right, and, applying the whip mercilessly to the flanks of his horses, started furiously toward the narrow street above mentioned.

Barely had the tumbril passed into this byway, before its entrance was closed by red-capped pikemen, who formed a solid phalanx from corner to corner.

And now a strange thing happened.

The occupants of the death-cart, who, but a few moments before, were going, with courage and resignation, to certain death, were terror-stricken at this unexpected change in the programme, and began to shriek loudly for help.

In justice to Jean Louvet and his friends, however, it should be stated that they did not join in the clamor of their companions, although they were equally overcome with surprise. Louvet, in particular, had ample

cause for apprehension, for was not Jacques the Blacksmith the chief instigator of the riot?

It was probable, he argued, that this fanatic had discovered the deception he had played upon him on the day the Convention had denounced him, and that he had organized a party of his adherents to rescue him, in order to wreak a private vengeance upon his deceiver. That the man was capable of such a daring act he well knew.

Faster and faster sped the tumbril, jolting over the rough pavement with such a clatter that the entire street was awakened. Windows flew open and heads were thrust out to ascertain the cause of the tumult; while shouts and cries of amazement arose from a thousand spectators, on seeing the death-cart dash by.

Louvet turned angrily to the driver.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked sternly.

"Be silent!" was the growling response. "You are in the hands of friends who wish to save you. Let that be sufficient!"

It seemed to him that he had heard that voice before; but he could not remember where. There was something in the man's figure that seemed familiar also, although this was probably a mere fancy. Presently the driver growled back at him this bit of advice:

"Tell your friends to cease their bawling, or I'll dump them out into the street."

Louvet complied with this command immediately, and, by adding a few encouraging words of his own, succeeded in quieting the terrified prisoners.

After proceeding at a rapid pace for some distance,

the driver wheeled into a winding street, which Louvet recognized at once as the ancient thoroughfare on which stood the Maison Rousseau.

Then it dawned upon him suddenly that his agents had conspired for his rescue. He was so sure of this that he again bent forward toward the driver and whispered:*

"Who are you? Your Chief commands you to answer!"

The man turned partly around, and muttered:

"I am known as Simon the Jailer."

Louvet was completely dumfounded; for, although he was aware of the fidelity of his followers, he did not think them capable of such supreme daring.

How had they managed to incite a riot in his behalf? And Jacques the Blacksmith—how had they induced such a rabid idolater of Robespierre to assist them in their scheme?

While he was endeavoring to find an answer to these questions, the tumbril turned into the narrow lane which led to the garden in the rear of Dr. Narbonne's residence. On reaching the enclosure, the driver reined in his horses, and, leaping to the ground, beckoned Jean Louvet to approach him.

"You know as well as I, Chief," he said, when they were alone, "that it will be impossible to admit all these strangers into our hiding-place. Not only is it against

* That a tumbril on its way to the Place de la Revolution was rescued by the populace, on the ninth of Thermidor (the day of Robespierre's downfall), is an historical fact accepted by many historians.

the rules of our band to do this, but it would be, in this case, an act of positive folly. Please remember we have imperiled our lives to save *you*, and no one else."

Louvet turned away from him disdainfully.

"In that case," he said, "you risked your lives in vain. I will return to my friends at once; for, rather than abandon them, I will perish in their company."

And he started to return to the tumbril.

"One moment!" cried Simon, anxiously, on perceiving his Chief's determination. "Can these comrades of yours be trusted?"

"I will answer for them with my life!" exclaimed Louvet with an imperious gesture.

"In that case," said Simon the Jailer, "I have nothing further to say against their admission."

With these words, he returned with Louvet to the tumbril, and assisted the prisoners to the ground. Then he helped them over the wall into the garden, and left them in charge of his Chief; for it was a matter of importance to their safety that he should drive off with the death-cart at once.

Scarcely had he taken his departure, when Jean Louvet beckoned the prisoners to follow, and led them to the secret door in the rear of the Maison Rousseau. His summons for admittance was immediately answered.

When the door had closed behind them, and he realized that his friends were out of danger, his joy was too great for him to bear.

"Saved at last! Saved!" he cried, in an ecstasy; then broke out into a wild paroxysm of sobs.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GAME STILL DOUBTFUL.

SAVED?

Undoubtedly Jean Louvet was justified in so believing; and yet his work was by no means finished.

He had seen the despotic Robespierre pass by him on his way to prison. He had heard the mad outcries of the people, as they hurled curses and maledictions upon his head; nevertheless, he had not taken into consideration that the tyrant had many powerful friends still at large who would certainly exert their utmost efforts to save him. Among these may be mentioned the Mayor of Paris, General Henriot, the Commander of the National Guards, and the entire Club of Jacobins who idolized him to a man.

In fact, even while Robespierre was on his way to the Luxembourg, these friends were taking active measures to incite an insurrection on behalf of the despot and his associates. Jacobin orators were despatched in all directions to arouse the populace by impassioned speeches. Henriot, followed by a troop of Municipal Gendarmes, galloped along the quais, calling upon everyone to join him in rescuing the prisoners. The Commune of Paris was sitting in the Hotel de Ville, deliberating in open rebellion to the

government, and finally issuing, as if authorized to do so, the following proclamation to the citizens:

"Brothers and friends! The country is in imminent danger! The wicked have mastered the Convention, where they hold in chains the virtuous Robespierre. To arms! To arms! Let us not lose the fruits of the eighteenth of August and the second of July."

Half maddened with drink, Henriot continued his furious course from street to street, and, at last, galloped to the Luxembourg to rescue his friends. On the way he encountered the troops of the Convention, who seized him, bound him with their belts, and threw him into a guard-house dead drunk.

Meanwhile, Robespierre and his associates had been rescued by the mob, and carried in triumph to the Mayor's room in the Hotel de Ville.

While these events were transpiring in the heart of Paris, Jean Louvet and his friends were resting in fancied security in the Maison Rousseau. One of his agents having arrived with intelligence that the National Convention, exhausted with the day's battle, had adjourned at five o'clock, for repose and sustenance, he naturally inferred that Robespierre's enemies had gained a complete victory, and that there was no longer the least cause for anxiety.

Louise and her maid had retired with the little girl to sleep; the other rescued prisoners were sitting together in a large apartment assigned to them, questioning one another and indulging in the wildest conjectures regarding their marvelous escape; while Louvet, M. Vauban and Dr. Narbonne were closeted

together in the latter's study, endeavoring to formulate a practicable scheme to enable the late prisoners to retire from Paris until the times became more settled.

Suddenly the dismal tolling of the tocsin burst forth from the neighboring steeples, and the rolling of drums disturbed the quiet of the summer evening. Shortly afterwards a low, ominous murmur arose from every narrow lane and street of St. Antoine, gradually increasing in volume, until there was no mistaking its significance. At last the sounds could be heard approaching their place of refuge, drawing nearer and nearer and filling the hearts of the listeners with dismay.

"What means this clamor?" asked Vauban anxiously.

"'Tis an insurrection of the masses," returned Louvet.

"For what purpose?"

"Probably to make a demonstration against Robespierre," was the answer.

These confident words were rudely interrupted by the sudden entrance of François the Idler. He came bursting into the study, pallid with alarm, and, utterly regardless of all ceremony, cried out in tones of frenzy:

"Oh, may God have mercy upon us! Robespierre has triumphed, and we are lost!"

Then he sank down panting into an armchair.

The shock produced by such unexpected tidings had a paralyzing effect on Jean Louvet; nor was it until the wild tumult of the mob, who were now passing beneath

the windows, roared in his ears, that he regained full possession of his faculties.

"*Vive Robespierre!* Down with the Convention!"

These, and similar cries aroused him to a realization of the true state of affairs, and turning to François he asked quickly:

"How has Robespierre triumphed?"

"Through the instrumentality of friends, and his popularity with the masses."

"But most of his friends were condemned with him, and the populace are only now rallying to his support."

"Nevertheless, the tyrant and his associates are at large."

"What!" exclaimed Louvet in alarm. "Do you mean to say that Robespierre has escaped from prison?"

"As far as Robespierre is concerned, he never was in prison. When he arrived at the Luxembourg, the jailer refused to receive him. As regards his associates, they were rescued by the populace at the instigation of the Jacobins."

"And where is Robespierre now?"

"Sitting in the Hotel de Ville, surrounded by his friends, planning the recovery of his power."

"But the Convention?" cried Louvet eagerly.

"Its members have just returned to the hall, where they are now in session, speechless and powerless with terror."

Jean Louvet rose instantly from his chair, and hurried into his apartment, to return shortly afterwards

attired as a Representative of the people. He instructed François to remain in the house to take his place in case of need; then, embracing his friends, departed to participate in the political struggle.

On reaching the Convention Hall, he found it surrounded by a howling mob, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he succeeded in gaining admittance. Notwithstanding that he was an outlaw, under sentence of death by the Convention, his appearance was greeted with expressions of joy from its members. Walking quickly down the aisle, he took his place in his former seat. Then he began to scrutinize the faces around him.

Every countenance was deadly white; every lip was quivering with fear. It was apparent that the Representatives, who had triumphed through firmness in the morning, were on the verge of meeting defeat through their cowardice now. Indeed at this stage of the tragedy, two governments were contending for the mastery—Robespierre, with the populace at his disposal, on one side; the Convention, with its friends, on the other.

Aware that the mob was aroused to fury, and that the National Guard, under Henriot, were marching against the Convention Hall, the Representatives were appalled at their danger; for they realized that the Revolutionary Tribunal, which alone could condemn the despot, might, through fear of the people, acquit him by acclamation. If this thing should happen, Robespierre would be led back in triumph to the Con-

vention and would immediately send his opponents to the guillotine.

Small wonder that, in view of this peril, the Representatives trembled in their seats; for the most ominous warnings reached their ears from time to time. Messengers brought them word that the Jacobin Club had met, and taken an oath to live or die with Robespierre.

Again it was reported that the masses were crowding in from the Faubourgs, and that three thousand young students had risen in arms as a body-guard for the despot. To add further to their dismay, the tocsin resounded far and near, calling upon the people to defend the man whom their Representatives had accused.

In this terrible crisis, the Convention, nerved by despair, remained firmly in their seats, well knowing that boldness alone could save them from destruction.

"Here is our post of duty, and here we will die!" they declared; while their friends rushed forth to rally defenders for the law.*

On hearing this noble resolve, Jean Louvet called loudly for a hearing, and President Collot, who was presiding, willingly granted it.

"We have all sworn to die at our posts," shouted Louvet in vibrant tones. "But that is no reason why we should not resist unto the end. I have a measure to propose which may possibly save us from destruction." Then, casting a sweeping glance that embraced all present, he added—"May I propose it, citizens?"

* Abbott's French Revolution.

"Proceed! We are listening!" they replied.

Jean Louvet bowed his thanks and resumed:

"In view of the danger that threatens the Republic, I move that Robespierre and his partisans be declared outlaws, and that all who support him in his rebellion, be outlawed as well."

Having delivered himself of these words, he quietly sank back into his seat, and awaited the impression his proposition had made upon the Convention.

For several seconds not a sound broke the silence.

Then a spontaneous burst of approval shook the hall. Not only was Robespierre outlawed, but a number of his supporters as well, among them, Henriot, who was at that moment threatening the Convention Hall with his troops. This brutal wretch, having slept off a first debauch in the guardhouse, had been rescued by Judge Coffinhal, Vice-President of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Returning immediately to his soldiers, and again drinking himself into a state of intoxication, he marched boldly to the Convention Hall, and ordered the doors blown open with his artillery.

At this critical moment, Jean Louvet left the hall, with several other Representatives close behind him. On reaching the street outside, he ran quickly toward the cannon, and took a position directly in front of the artillerymen.

"Stand aside, if you value your life! Don't you see we are about to fire?"

And one of the gunners approached his cannon with a lighted match.

Jean Louvet regarded him fearlessly.

"One moment, my brave fellow!" he said.

Then, seeing that the other hesitated, he broke out scornfully:

"Soldiers! Look at that drunken man!"—here he pointed dramatically at Henriot—"Who but a drunkard would ever point his arms against his country, or its Representatives? Will you, who have ever deserved so much from your country, cast shame and dishonor on her now?"

The soldiers began to waver.

Henriot instantly lost his courage, put spurs to his horse and galloped furiously toward the Hotel de Ville. The Convention, in the meantime, having appointed Barras to the command of the National Guards, he strode forth and accepted the responsibility without hesitation.

Thus was the tide of affairs turned suddenly in favor of the Convention.

Marching rapidly through the streets of Paris, Barras rallied the citizens around him, and, having dispersed several bands of Robespierre's supporters, proceeded to the Hotel de Ville, where the outlaw was then holding court.

During the time since he had regained his liberty, he was repeatedly urged to authorize an insurrection, in order to accomplish a signal triumph over the Convention; yet, notwithstanding the most urgent entreaties of the Jacobins and the Municipal Government, he had persistently refused to encourage or to accept such lawless means.

"I am resolved," he replied, heroically, "either to triumph or fall by submission to the law only. I firmly believe the Revolutionary Tribunal will acquit me. But," he added calmly, "if they should decide to condemn me to death, the death of one just man is less hurtful to the Republic than the example of a revolt against the National Convention."*

Were these words spoken in sincerity; or were they uttered hypocritically in full confidence of his ultimate triumph?

These questions have remained unanswered.

The scene that followed the appearance of Barras before the Hotel de Ville is too well known to be repeated here in detail. As the soldiers were ascending the stairs, Lebas committed suicide by shooting himself through the heart. Augustin Robespierre leaped from a window into a courtyard below, breaking his leg. Coffinhal, enraged in contemplating the ruin in which the drunken imbecility of Henriot had involved them, deliberately threw him out of the window on a pile of rubbish below.

Meanwhile, Robespierre sat calmly at a table awaiting his fate. One of the gendarmes sent to arrest him, discharged a pistol at his head, fracturing his jaw, and carrying away several of his teeth. His head dropped upon the table, deluging the papers before him with blood.

The troops of the Convention now filled the rooms of the Hotel de Ville, arresting all its inmates. Beside

* Lamartine.

Robespierre and his friends, over eighty members of the Municipal Government, bound two by two together, completed the melancholy procession to the Conciergerie.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GAME IS WON.

JEAN LOUVET did not return to the Maison Rousseau that night.

In fact, he did not dare to do so; for the entire city was in an uproar, and a man as all-powerful as Robespierre had been, might again turn the tide of battle in his own favor. Through the dark streets the gleam of innumerable torches was reflected, throwing a lurid light upon the multitudes of insurrectionists who had come in from the Faubourgs to the assistance of the despot and his friends.

Several of these bands marched in disorder to disperse the Convention; but, on finding the hall strongly guarded by soldiers, departed elsewhere to join other bands and seek direction under a suitable leader. In the meantime, the friends of the Convention were busy in representing the exact state of affairs to the people, and were so far successful, that, before the dawn of another day, the fickle Parisians were seduced from their allegiance to Robespierre, and had become his most envenomed enemies.

About five o'clock in the morning, of the tenth of Thermidor (28th of July), Jean Louvet found himself in the vast crowd that had gathered before the

Conciergerie Prison, to await the coming forth of Robespierre and his partisans.

His patience was not put to a severe test, however; for, shortly after his arrival, the iron gate of the prison was opened, and the prisoners were led forth to take their places in the waiting tumbrils. A profound silence was maintained, until the despot emerged through the gateway, stretched upon a litter, borne by four jailers. His fractured jaw was bound up by a dirty handkerchief, steeped in blood.

After him came Couthon, a paralytic. Unable to walk he was carried in the arms of two jailers. Robespierre, the younger, still insensible from his desperate leap from the window, was conveyed in the arms of two others, with his broken limb hanging helplessly down, and trailing along the ground. Next came the corpse of Lebas, covered with a tablecloth spotted with his blood. In the rear of this frightful procession marched St. Just, bareheaded, with dejected countenance, his hands bound tightly behind him.

At the sight of these unhappy men the crowd broke forth into the most furious outcries. Against Robespierre in particular the people vented their rage. He cast reproachful glances upon them as he was lifted into a tumbril; but never uttered one word in extenuation of his acts.

On reaching the Tuileries, he was laid upon a table in an ante-room, where he was submitted to the most frightful mental tortures. An interminable crowd pressed into the apartment past the guards, actuated by a morbid curiosity to catch a glimpse of the fallen

dictator. Men and women surged around him, like the waves of the sea, overwhelming him with reproaches, curses and insults.

In the extremity of his anguish, Robespierre feigned death, hoping by this means to escape the execrations of his tormentors.*

When Louvet arrived at the Tuileries, and beheld the agony of his enemy, tears of pity welled up in his eyes. The blood was flowing freely from the despot's fractured jaw, trickling down his throat and choking him. The day was intensely hot, and the suffering wretch was tormented with an insatiable thirst that parched his feverish lips.

Thus did the author of so much suffering to others, remain for more than an hour, enduring the most excruciating pangs of bodily and mental anguish.

At the expiration of this period, he and his confederates were removed to the chamber of the Committee of General Safety for examination; then back to the Conciergerie to endure a few additional hours of suffering; finally before that merciless Tribunal which was but the last stepping stone to death. Their trial lasted but a few moments; for, as they were already outlawed and condemned, it was merely necessary to establish their identity.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, Jean Louvet was standing on the steps of a building, fronting the Place de la Revolution, awaiting the final act in the stupendous drama he had set in motion. Not far from his elevated position rose the frightful scaffold of the guil-

* Abbott's French Revolution.

lotine. Samson, the executioner, was pacing from side to side of the platform, his arms bared and crossed upon his brawny chest, and a filthy red cap pulled down over his eyes, half concealing his ferocious countenance. At intervals he paused in his walk to glance down upon the crowd below, or exchange a merry jest with some friend he recognized.

Never before had Louvet seen such a vast multitude of people as that which now surged around the guillotine. It seemed that Paris had vomited forth, from all her slums and purlieus, the most abandoned and wicked of her children—wretches who lived by crime, violence and insurrection.

Every window in the neighboring houses, that commanded an unobstructed view of the engine of death, was filled with expectant faces. The fortunate citizens who had secured such advantageous positions, shouted scoffingly at the multitude below, while the ragged wretches, who composed the throng, returned their jests with outbursts of jovial laughter.

Suddenly the sound of an approaching tumult reached the crowded square, and every voice was hushed in an instant.

It was apparent that the long looked-for procession was approaching. In a few minutes a body of mounted troops appeared in the Place de la Revolution, and began making a passage to the guillotine by striking the people with the flat of their sabres, and forcing them back. They were quickly followed by the death carts bearing Robespierre and his partisans.

On beholding the condemned, the fickle crowd burst

out into a terrific uproar, surging round the tumbril occupied by Robespierre, and heaping imprecations upon the defeated man, to whom they would have shouted hosannas had be been the victor. From his coign of vantage, Jean Louvet beheld the entrance of his enemy into the square. The tyrant, his brother, Couthon, Henriot, all mangled, bleeding and with broken bones, were in the first cart, with the corpse of Lebas. As it jolted over the uneven pavement, shrieks of anguish arose from the wounded victims.

"May God have mercy upon them!" exclaimed Louvet in tones of sympathy. "They are enduring the sufferings of the damned."

Just as the first tumbril reached the steps of the guillotine, a clock in a steeple near by, struck six.

Then the following events happened with marvelous rapidity.

Robespierre was lifted from the death cart, and conducted to the steps leading to the engine of death. He ascended the scaffold with a firm, quick step.

Was it feared that at the last moment he might call upon the populace to rescue him?

If he had such an intention, he was not granted the time to carry it out; for, no sooner had he reached the platform, than the executioner sprang forward, and brutally tore the bloody bandage from his wound.

Jean Louvet, whose eyes were still fixed upon him, beheld his fractured jaw drop down in a ghastly manner, and at the same time heard a shriek of frightful agony.

He turned away in horror from the scene.

Then he heard the sullen sound of the falling axe, and, when he again looked toward the scaffold, the head of the great Robespierre had fallen into the basket.

Thus died Maximilian Robespierre in the thirty-fifth year of his age; a man whose real character must ever remain shadowy and undefined.

To the refugees in the Maison Rousseau, his death meant the end of sufferings. M. Vauban had another trial which resulted in his complete vindication, and his reinstatement in his seat in the Convention.

As for Jean Louvet, he resigned from that body despite the protests of the men he had saved from death, while Dr. Narbonne and his patients disappeared from the Maison Rousseau and left Paris. It is said, however, that they returned to the city when the *emigrés* were recalled by Napoleon.

* * * * * * * * *

"My beloved Jean," asked Louise Vauban on the day before their wedding, "I have long suspected that you are not what you seem. Tell me, is your name really Jean Louvet?"

The young man smiled.

"I perceive how it is," he answered; "you believe it wrong for a husband to have any secrets from his wife. And you are right." Placing his arm affectionately round her waist, he added softly, "No, Louise, my real name is not Jean Louvet."

"Then what is it, dearest?"

"Will you promise not to denounce me, if I tell you?"

"How absurd you are," she murmured. "You know very well I'll not denounce you."

"Well, in that case, I will tell you my secret," he said with a happy laugh. "Know, my dearest Louise, that I am the Duke of Lamorelle, an aristocrat and royalist to the heart's core."

The girl's cheeks glowed with pleasure, for she was not half the staunch republican that she seemed.

"And Dr. Narbonne and his mysterious patients, who are they?"

"All men of noble birth like myself," was the reply.

"But Simon, André and François?"

"They also are titled personages."

Then he told her how they had elected him as their Chief, and had come to Paris to act as secret agents for the exiled royal family.

"And, dearest," he concluded fervently, "we must be forever grateful to those three brave men; for it was they who incited the riot that saved our lives. It was Simon, André and François who rescued us from the guillotine."

"It all seems so wonderful," she said after a pause. "I cannot imagine how they accomplished it."

"It was François' idea," was the Duke of Lamorelle's reply. "You see, he had artfully converted a fellow, who is known as Jacques the Blacksmith, into a bitter enemy of Robespierre, and consequently into a friend of mine. This man was easily persuaded to surround our tumbril with his followers, and hold the

guards in check, until we had effected our escape. In the meantime, our good friend, Simon, had bribed the driver of one of the tumbrils to allow him to change places with him for that day. On reaching the Conciergerie, he fell in with the friendly jailer, and bribed him to conduct us to his cart. André and another of my band were the masked men who intimidated the guards in charge of our tumbril. It was a daring and clever plot, was it not?"

"Yes; but not half so daring as the game of politics you won against the tyrant Robespierre," replied Louise, gazing up at him admiringly.

THE END.

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